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Security Council

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Provisional

8225th meeting
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New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. De Mistura is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: This emergency meeting of the Security Council underscores the gravity of the events in recent days in Syria, of which there are severe consequences for civilians. It takes place at a time of increased international tensions, drawing national, regional and international actors into dangerous situations of potential or actual confrontation. It is an important meeting.

There is an urgent need for the Council to address the situation with unity and purpose. How did we reach this point? The month of March saw devastating violence in part of eastern Ghouta, which resulted in at least 1,700 people killed or injured in opposition-controlled areas, dozens and dozens of people killed or injured in Government-controlled areas and, ultimately, the evacuation of 130,000 people, including fighters, family members and other civilians.

However, in Douma there was a fragile ceasefire, which continued for most of March. The United Nations good offices played an important role in that regard. Since 31 March, the United Nations has no longer been able to be involved in talks, since, at that time, the Syrian Government did not agree to our presence, although we made efforts to propose concrete ways to address the issues that we understood were arising in the continuing contacts, including the proposal to activate the detainee working group agreed in Astana. However, that proposal was not taken up at the time.

From 2 April, the evacuation of some 4,000 fighters, family members and other civilians from Douma to northern Syria took place. However, on 6 April there was a major escalation in violence. There were reports of sustained air strikes and shelling against Douma, the killing of civilians, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and attacks damaging health facilities. There were also reports of shelling on Damascus city, which reportedly again killed or injured civilians. Jaysh Al-Islam requested our involvement in emergency talks in extremis, but there was no positive response to that request when it conveyed the same message to the other side.

At approximately 8 p.m. local time on 7 April, reports of an alleged chemical weapons attack in Douma started to emerge. Pictures immediately circulated on social media showing what appeared to be lifeless men, women and children. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground claimed to have received hundreds of cases of civilians with symptoms consistent with exposure to chemical agents. The same NGOs claimed that at least 49 people had been killed and hundreds injured.

I wish to recall what the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, noted, namely, that the United Nations "is not in a position to verify these reports". However, he also made it very clear that he cannot ignore them and that he "is particularly alarmed by allegations that chemical weapons have been used against civilian populations in Douma" once again. He further emphasized "that any use of chemical weapons, if confirmed, is abhorrent and requires a thorough investigation".

I note that a number of States have strongly alluded to or expressed the suspicion that the Syrian Government was responsible for the alleged chemical attack. I also note that other States, as well as the Government of Syria itself, have strongly questioned the credibility of those allegations, depicting the attacks as a fabrication or/and a provocation. My comment is that this is one more reason for there to be a thorough independent investigation.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has said that it has made the preliminary analysis of the reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons and is in the process of gathering further information from all available sources. My colleague Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who is with us in the Chamber today, will further address this matter. But I urge the Security Council, in accordance with its own mandate to maintain international peace and security and uphold international law, to, for God's sake, ensure that a mechanism is found to investigate these allegations and assign responsibility.

Returning to the narrative of the events, at around midnight on 7 April, hours after the alleged chemical-weapons attack, Jaysh Al-Islam informed the United Nations that it had reached an agreement with the Russian Federation and the Syrian Government. The Russian Federation Ministry for Defence stated that the agreement encompasses a ceasefire and Jaysh Al-Islam fighters laying down their arms or evacuating Douma. The Russian Federation also reported that up to 8,000 Jaysh Al-Islam fighters and 40,000 of their family members were to evacuate.

As I brief the Security Council now, we understand that additional evacuations from Douma are already under way. We have also received reports that some detainees — the ones we had heard about before — had begun to be released from Douma today. We note reports that the agreement provides for civilians who decide to stay to remain under Russian Federation guarantees, with the resumption of services in coordination with a local committee of civilians.

I urge the Syrian Government and the Russian Federation to ensure the protection of those civilians so that as many civilians as possible can stay in their homes if they choose to, or leave to a place of their own choosing or return as per international law. I urge that there be, for there should be, an immediate refocusing for the implementation of resolution 2401 (2018). What we have see is basically an escalation before a de-escalation.

Clearly, the dangers of further escalation arise from situations beyond Ghouta as well. We have received reports of missiles targeting the Syrian Government's Tiyas, or T-4, airbase early this morning. No State has claimed responsibility for that reported strike. The United States and France have explicitly denied any involvement. The Syrian Government, the Russian Federation and Iran have suggested that Israel could have carried out the attack, with Iranian State media reporting that over a dozen military personnel were killed or injured, including four Iranian military advisers. The Government of Israel has not commented. The United Nations is unable to independently verify or attribute responsibility for that attack, but we urge all parties to show their utmost restraint and avoid any further escalation or confrontation.

We are also concerned about the dynamics in other areas of Syria. Syrians in Dar'a, northern rural Homs, eastern Qalamoun, Hamah and Idlib have all expressed to us their own fears that they may soon face escalations similar to what we have seen in eastern Ghouta. We therefore urge the Security Council and the Astana guarantors and those States involved in the Amman efforts to work towards reinstating de-escalation in those areas and elsewhere in Syria. The indications are the opposite at the moment.

Meanwhile, following its operations in Afrin, the Turkish Government has indicated the potential for further operations in other areas of northern Syria if Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat and Kurdish People's Protection Units forces are not removed from those areas. Military operations in such areas have the potential of raising international tensions. We therefore urge all parties concerned to de-escalate, show restraint and find means to implement resolution 2401 (2018) through dialogue and fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. Let me also highlight the fact that we have recently seen — and this is particularly tragic when we consider the efforts all of us, including all members of the Security Council, have made in the last year — the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant launch new operations within Syria, south of Damascus, in rural Damascus, in remote areas near the Iraqi border.

I would like to conclude with some bottom lines, if I may.

First, civilians are paying a very heavy price for the military escalation. We are not seeing de-escalation; we are seeing the contrary. Today our first priority must be to protect civilians from the war, from the conflict, from chemical weapons, from hunger. We call on all sides to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, including humanitarian access across Syria to all people in need. We urge once

more for concrete respect for resolution 2401 (2018) throughout Syria, which is, after all, a resolution of the Security Council.

Secondly, continued allegations of the use of chemical agents are of extremely grave concern. Those allegations must be independently and urgently investigated. Any use of chemical weapons is absolutely prohibited and constitutes a very serious violation of international law, the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Preventing impunity and any further use of chemical weapons and upholding international law must be an utmost priority for all members of the Security Council.

Thirdly, I have to say this very slowly because today is the first time, in over four years of briefing the Security Council in person, that I have reached a point in which I have to express a concern about international security, not just regional or national or Syrian security, but international security. Recent developments have more than ever before brought to the surface the dangers that the Secretary-General warned about recently at the Munich Security Conference, when he spoke of "different faultlines" in the Middle East that are interconnected and crossing each other, of conflicting interests of both global and regional Powers, and forms of escalation that can have absolutely devastating consequences that are difficult for us to even imagine. The Council cannot allow a situation of uncontrollable escalation to develop in Syria on any front. Instead, it must find unity and address the concrete threats to international peace and security in Syria today.

I am sorry to have been this brief, but I wanted to focus on one specific concern, namely, the threat to international security related to what we are seeing now in Syria and the danger of the alleged chemical-weapons attacks being repeated. Next time I will brief the Council on humanitarian and other issues and on the political process, which I know we are all interested in focusing upon, but today is the day for talking about security — international security — and peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. De Mistura for his very informative briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Markram.

Mr. Markram: I thank you for the opportunity to address the Council again today, Mr. President. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, is away on official travel.

It has been less than a week since I last briefed the Council (see S/PV.8221) on the issue of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In the intervening period, new and deeply disturbing allegations of the use of chemical weapons have come to light. Over the past weekend, there have been reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma, in the Syrian Arab Republic. According to reports that came in yesterday, it is alleged that at least 49 people were killed and hundreds more injured in a chemical-weapon attack. More than 500 other individual cases reportedly presented with symptoms consistent with such an attack. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in touch with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the matter. The OPCW, which implements the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which Syria is a State party, is gathering information about the incident from all available sources, through its Fact-finding Mission in Syria. After completing its investigation, the Fact-finding Mission will report its findings on the alleged attack to the States parties to the Convention.

Sadly, there is little to say today that has not already been said. The use of chemical weapons is unjustifiable. Those responsible must be held to account. That those views have been stated on many previous occasions does not lessen the seriousness with which the Secretary-General regards such allegations. Nor does it lessen the truth behind them, which is that what we are seeing in Syria cannot go unchallenged by anyone who values the decades of effort that have been put in to bring about the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As the body charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council must unite in the face of this continuing threat and fulfil its responsibilities. To do otherwise, or simply to do nothing, is to accept, tacitly or otherwise, that such a challenge is insurmountable. The use of chemical weapons cannot become the status quo, nor can we continue to fail the victims of such weapons.

Just over one year ago, in responding to the attack on Khan Shaykhun, the Secretary-General called for those responsible to be held accountable, stating that there can be no impunity for such horrific acts. Just over one week ago, speaking on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, I noted that unity in the Security Council on a dedicated mechanism for accountability would provide the best foundation for success in that regard. I reiterate that belief here, as

well as the readiness of the Secretary-General and the Office for Disarmament Affairs to assist.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Markram for his informative briefing.

I now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): If you imagine, Mr. President, that I derive pleasure from the subject of my statement today, or from speaking at great length, you are wrong. Unfortunately, however, the situation is such that I have a lot to say today. And you will have to listen to me.

We thank Mr. De Mistura and Mr. Markram for their briefings.

The Russian Federation asked that this meeting be convened under the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security" because we are deeply alarmed about the fact that a number of capitals — Washington first and foremost, with London and Paris blindly following its lead — are purposely steering a course designed to supercharge international tensions. The leadership of the United States, Britain and France, with no grounds and no thought for the consequences, are taking a confrontational line on Russia and Syria and pushing others towards it too. They have a broad range of weapons in their arsenal — slander, insults, bellicose rhetoric, blackmail, sanctions and threats of the use of force against a sovereign State. Their threats against Russia are brazen, and the tone they take has gone beyond the limits of the permissible. Even during the Cold War their predecessors did not express themselves so crudely about my country. What next?

I remember the rhetorical question that President Putin of Russia put to our Western partners, and especially the United States, from the rostrum of the General Assembly in 2015 (see A/70/PV.13), about their careless geopolitical experiments in the Middle East, when he asked them if they at least realized what they had done. At the time, the question went unanswered. But there is an answer, and it is that no, they do not realize what they have done. As they do not realize what they are doing now. It is not only we who are perplexed at their lack of any coherent strategy on any issue. It perplexes most of the people in this Chamber. They just do not want to ask them about it openly. Wherever they go, whatever they touch, they leave behind chaos in their wake in the murky water where they have gone fishing for some kind of fish. But the only fish they catch are mutants. I will ask them another rhetorical question. Do they understand the dangerous place they are dragging the world to?

One of the areas where the hostility manifests itself most strongly is Syria. The terrorists and extremists supported by external sponsors are being defeated. Let me remind those responsible that these are the terrorists and extremists whom they equipped, financed and dumped into the country in order to overthrow the lawful Government. Now we can see why this is causing hysteria among those who have invested their political and material capital in such dark forces.

In the past few weeks, thanks to Russia's efforts to implement the Security Council's resolutions, a massive operation has been carried out to unblock eastern Ghouta, whose residents have been forced to endure the humiliation of the rebel militias for several years. More than 150 thousand civilians were evacuated from this suburb of Damascus, completely voluntarily and under the necessary security conditions. Tens of thousands of them have already been able to return to liberated areas and many have been taken in by relatives. The changes in their demographic composition that the defenders of the Syrian opposition have been screaming about have not happened. That is a lie. Some extremely complex negotiations were conducted with the leaders of the armed groups, as a result of which many left the neighbourhoods they were occupying, with full guarantees for their security. Incidentally, there were several attempted acts of terrorism during these transport operations when militias tried to bring suicide belts onto the buses and were prevented. Others preferred to regulate their status with the Syrian authorities. Thanks to the presidential amnesty, they will now be able to return to civilian life, and may even eventually be able to join Syria's security forces. That represents the implementation of the United Nations principle of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration.

However, not everyone is so keen on such positive dynamics. The outside sponsors — that is, the leading Western countries — were ready to grasp at any straw in order to hang on to any centre of terrorist resistance, however tiny, within striking distance of the Syrian capital, so that the militias could continue to terrorize ordinary residents, taking their food and begging humanitarian aid from the international community. Incidentally, they were not about to

share medicines with those ordinary civilians, as an inspection of the strongholds left behind by the fighters revealed. As happened previously in eastern Aleppo, the improvised hospital facilities in basements were full of medicines that thanks to Western sanctions were not to be had for love or money in Damascus and other Government-controlled areas. Mass graves and bodies that showed evidence of torture were also discovered. The dimensions of the tunnels that the jihadists used were astonishing. Some of them could easily accommodate small trucks travelling in both directions. Those impressive underground facilities connected the positions of groups that some view as moderate to the strongholds of Jabhat Al-Nusra.

On 6 April, at their sponsors' instructions, Jaysh Al-Islam's new ringleaders prevented the fourth group of militia fighters from evacuating Douma and resumed rocket and mortar fire on residential areas of Damascus, targeting Mezzeh, Mezzeh 86, Ish Al-Warwar, Abu Rummaneh and Umayyad Square. According to official data, eight civilians were killed and 37 were wounded. It is regrettable that we seen no statements from Western capitals condemning the shelling of a historic part of Damascus.

The next day, 7 April, militias accused the Syrian authorities of dropping barrel bombs containing a toxic substance. However, they got their versions mixed up, referring to it sometimes as chlorine and sometimes as sarin or a mixture of poison gases. In a familiar pattern, the rumours were immediately seized on by non-governmental organizations financed by Western capitals and White Helmets operating in the guise of rescue workers. These so-called reports were also just as quickly disseminated through media outlets. I should once again point out that many of these dubious opposition entities have an accurate list of the email addresses of the representatives of Security Council members, which leads us to conclude that some of our colleagues, with a reckless attitude to their position, have been leaking sensitive information to those they sponsor. Incidentally, we all should remember the incident in which the White Helmets accidentally posted on the Internet a video showing the preparation stages for filming the next so-called victim of an attack allegedly perpetrated by the Syrian army. The chemical "series" that began in 2013 has continued to run, with each subsequent episode designed to top the impact of the previous one.

In Washington, London and Paris, conclusions have immediately been reached as to the guilt of the Syrian authorities, or regime, as they call it. Has no one wondered why Damascus needs this? While the Syrian leadership has received its share of insults, the main burden of responsibility has been laid at the door of Russia and Iran, to no one's surprise, I believe. As is now customary, it has occurred at lightning speed and without any kind of investigation. On 8 April, Syrian troops searching the village of Al-Shifuniya, near Douma, discovered a small, makeshift Jaysh Al-Islam chemical-munitions factory, along with German-produced chlorine reagents and specialized equipment.

The Istanbul-based opposition journalist Asaad Hanna posted a video on his Twitter feed that was allegedly from the area of the incident. In it, an unidentified individual in a gas mask, presumably from the White Helmets, is posing against a backdrop of a homemade chemical bomb that allegedly landed in a bedroom in a building in Douma. It is accompanied by commentary about what it calls another of the regime's attacks on civilians. There can be no doubt that this production was staged. The trajectory of the alleged bomb is entirely unnatural. It fell through the roof and landed gently on a wooden bed without damaging it in any way and was clearly placed there before the scene was shot.

In an interesting coincidence, the chemical act of provocation in Douma on Saturday, 7 April, occurred immediately after the United States delegation in the Security Council was instructed to call for expert consultations for today, Monday, 9 April, on its draft resolution on a mechanism for investigating incidents involving chemical weapons. Today far-reaching changes were made to the initial text. In such murky circumstances, of course, we have to determine what happened. But we have to do it honestly, objectively and impartially, without sacrificing the principle of the presumption of innocence and certainly not by prejudging the process of an investigation.

Despite this provocation, the Russian specialists have continued their efforts to resolve the situation in eastern Ghouta. On Sunday afternoon, 8 April, according to new agreements, the evacuation of Jaysh Al-Islam combatants was resumed. Following Douma's liberation from militants, Russian radiological, chemical and biological protection specialists were sent there to collect evidence. They took soil samples that showed no presence of nerve agents or substances

containing chlorine. Local residents and combatants who were no longer fighting were interviewed. Not one local confirmed the chemical attack. At the local hospital, no one with symptoms of sarin or chlorine poisoning had been admitted. There are no other active medical facilities in Douma. No bodies of people who had died from being poisoned were found, and the medical staff and residents had no information about where they might have been buried. Any use of sarin or chlorine in Douma is therefore unconfirmed. By the way, representatives of the Syrian Red Crescent refuted statements allegedly made on their behalf about providing assistance to victims of toxic gases.

I call on those who plan to denounce the regime when they speak after me to assume that there was no chemical-weapon attack.

Sweden has drafted a resolution calling for the incident to be investigated. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) does not need a resolution to investigate it, but we are willing to consider it. Today we propose to do what is envisaged in the draft resolution, which is to let the OPCW, which Mr. Üzümcü, Director-General of its Technical Secretariat, has announced is ready to deal with the situation, fly to Damascus immediately, if possible tomorrow. There the Syrian authorities and the Russian military will ensure the necessary conditions so that the OPCW experts can travel to the site of the alleged incident and familiarize themselves with the situation. That, by the way, is what President Trump and other Western leaders have been urging us to do.

The Syrians have repeatedly warned that there might be chemical provocations. At the Russian Centre for the Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic they are saying that the equipment needed to film the next purported chemical attack has already been brought in. We have also made statements to that effect in the Security Council. Everyone has heard those warnings, but has deliberately ignored them because they do not correspond to the doctrinal positions espoused by those who dream of seeing the legitimate Government of yet another Arab country destroyed.

There has still been no attention given to the discovery in November and December 2017 of a significant quantity of chemical munitions on Syrian territory that had been liberated from militias. In terrorist warehouses in Az-Zahiriya and Al-Hafiya in Hama governorate, 20 one-ton containers and more than 50 pieces of ordnance containing toxic chemicals were discovered. In Tel Adel in Idlib governorate, 24 tons of toxic chemical, presumed to be chlorine, were discovered. At a storage site in Moadamiya, 30 kilometres to the north-east of Damascus, 240- and 160-millimetre-calibre munitions and plastic canisters of organo-phosphorous compounds were found. In the area around As-Suwayda in Idlib governorate, an manufacturing facility for synthesizing various toxic substances was found, along with 54 pieces of chemical ordnance and 44 containers of chemicals that could be used to manufacture toxic substances.

Since the beginning of this year alone, four instances of militias using toxic chemicals against Government troop positions have been established in Suruj and Al-Mushairfeh districts, and more than 100 Syrian troops have been hospitalized. On 3 March, during the liberation of Khazram and Aftris in eastern Ghouta, soldiers from a sub-unit of Government troops discovered an auxiliary workshop for homemade chemical munitions. This far from exhaustive list is an indication of the misdeeds of the still unreconciled opposition. And yet we have seen no eagerness to send OPCW expert groups there to collect evidence of these events. We demand that the OPCW verify all of these areas. They are accessible. We are also seeing information that American instructors in the Al-Tanf camp have trained a number of groups of fighters to carry out provocations using chemical weapons in order to create a pretext for a rocket strikes and bombings.

It has been clear to us that sooner or later there would be an attempt to bring the jihadists out of harm's way and at the same time to punish the regime that some Western capitals hate. The talking heads on television have thrown themselves into urging a repeat of last year's effort at a military attack on Syria. This morning there were missile strikes on the T-4 airfield in Homs governorate. We are deeply troubled by such actions.

The provocations in Douma are reminiscent of last year's incident in Khan Shaykhun, with their shared element being the planned nature of the attacks. Analysis of the operations conducted by the United States in April 2017, on the eve of the incident in Khan Shaykhun and after it, shows that Washington prepared its operation in advance. From 4 to 7 April of last year — in other words, from the day that a toxic substance was used in Khan Shaykhun until the strike on the Al-Shayrat airbase — the USS *Porter* and *Ross* naval destroyers

were already present in the Mediterranean Sea, where they were engaged in planned operations. They did not call into any ports where an exchange of munitions could have been effected as a way to increase their quantity of cruise missiles.

Specifically, from 4 to 5 April, the USS *Porter* was located south-east of Sicily and the *Ross* was en route from the Rota naval base to an area south of Sardinia. Later, on 6 April, both ships were observed moving at accelerated speed towards the area of the firing positions to the south-west of Cyprus, from where they launched a massive strike on Al-Shayrat on 7 April. However, the 59 Tomahawk missiles that were launched would have exceeded the two destroyers' total munitions capacity if they had actually been engaged in the anti-missile defence operations that they were assigned to, which required only 48 units. That means, therefore, that even before the chemical incident in Khan Shaykhun, these United States naval vessels undertook a military operation with a strike capability above the number of cruise missiles necessary for their anti-missile defence operations, which could be evidence of advance planning by Washington of an action against Damascus.

Among other things, Saturday's fake news from Douma was aimed at diverting the public's attention from the circus that is the Skripal case, in which London has become terminally mired, hurling completely unproven accusations at Russia and accomplishing its basic purpose of extracting solidarity from its allies in order to construct an anti-Russian front. Now the British are shifting away from a transparent investigation and concrete responses to the questions they have been asked while simultaneously covering their tracks.

At the Security Council meeting on 5 April on the Skripal case (see S/PV.8224), we warned the Council that the attempt to accuse us, without proof, of involvement in the Salisbury incident was linked to the Syrian chemical issue. There was an interesting new development regarding the issue yesterday. As Britain's Foreign Minister Boris Johnson was continuing his display of rapier wi. "exposing" Russia, another gem emerged. *The Times* informed us that Royal Air Force experts in southern Cyprus had intercepted a message sent from outside Damascus to Moscow on the day of the Skripals' poisoning that contained the phrase "the package has been delivered" and said that two people had "successfully departed". Apparently this formed part of the intelligence that London provided to its allies before expelling our Russian diplomats. Is not it obvious to everyone that there is an irrefutable Syria-Russia-Salisbury connection? I will give the British intelligence services one more huge hint, for free. Why do they not assume that the Novichok they are so thrilled about reached Salisbury directly from Syria? In a package. To cover its tracks. How pathetic.

Ambassador Haley recently stated that Russia will never be a friend of the United States. To that, I say that friendship is both reciprocal and voluntary. One cannot force a friendship and we are not begging the United States to be friends. What we want from it is very little — normal, civilized relations, which it arrogantly refuses, disregarding basic courtesy. However, the United States is mistaken if it thinks that it has friends. Its so-called friends are only those who cannot say no to it. And that is the only criterion for friendship that it understands.

Russia has friends. And unlike the United States, we do not have adversaries. That is not the prism through which we view the world. It is international terrorism that is our enemy. However, we continue to propose cooperating with the United States. That cooperation should be respectful and mutual, and aimed at resolving genuine problems, not imaginary ones, and it should be just as much in the interests of the United States. Ultimately, as permanent members of the Security Council, we have a special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Through the relevant channels, we already conveyed to the United States that military action conducted on false pretences against Syria, where Russian troops are deployed at the request of its legitimate Government, could have extremely serious repercussions. We urge Western politicians to temper their hawkish rhetoric, seriously consider the possible repercussions and cease their feeble, foolhardy efforts, which merely produce challenges to global security. We can see very good examples of what becomes of the military misadventures of the West in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya. No one has invested Western leaders with the power to take on the roles of the world's policeman and its investigators, prosecutors, judges and executioners as well. We urge them to return to the world of legality, comply with the Charter of the United Nations and work collectively to address the problems that arise rather than attempting to realize its own selfish geopolitical dreams at every step. All our energy should be focused on supporting the political process in Syria, and for that, all stakeholders with influence must unite in a

constructive effort. Russia is always ready for that kind of cooperation.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to request a briefing of the Security Council on the results of the United Nations assessment mission in Raqqa and on the situation in the Rukban camp. We can see how the coalition members are trying to complicate a resolution of the problems resulting from their actions in Syria, particularly the carpet-bombing operation designed to wipe out Raqqa. No chemical provocations will distract our attention from that issue.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): We thank Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Thomas Markram for their briefings.

Only five days ago, here in this Chamber (see S/PV.8221), we mourned as we remembered the sarin attack at Khan Shaykhun that occurred a year ago. This weekend another devastating gas attack was carried out in the city of Douma, killing more than 45 civilians and injuring more than 500. It was another in a series of chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. That is unacceptable. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is one of nine Security Council members that requested today's emergency meeting because we all believed that it was critically important to address this horrific attack. We must reinstate the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. We must underscore the basic norms of the international legal order and stop the ongoing tragedy in eastern Ghouta and Douma.

We almost met twice today because one permanent member of the Council seemed not to want a focused discussion on the issue at hand, the chemical attack in Douma. That begs the question of whether that particular member State would prefer the international community to stand by and watch like a spectator while it covers for the crimes of its ally, the Syrian regime, some of which amount to serious war crimes. The Council must not stand idly by. It is high time for us to act in three ways, condemning, protecting and holding to account. First, today we should condemn in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons. International law has been trampled on. Silence and impunity are not an option. However, condemnation alone is not enough.

Secondly, we must deliver on our responsibility to protect. The protection of civilians must remain an absolute priority. We call on the Astana guarantors to use their influence to prevent any further attacks. They must ensure a cessation of hostilities and a de-escalation of the violence, as per resolution 2401 (2018). An immediate ceasefire is needed in Douma so that humanitarian and medical aid can reach the victims of the attack and so that humanitarian personnel can continue their life-saving work. We owe it to the men, women and children of Douma and of Syria. We owe it to our own citizens.

Furthermore, the Kingdom of the Netherlands would also like to point out that the majority of the States Members of the United Nations count on the permanent members of the Council not to use their veto in cases of mass atrocities. The international community should be able to count on the Council to uphold international humanitarian law and the international prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and to act when international law is trampled. Let me be clear. We support the humanitarian work of the White Helmets. They do extremely important humanitarian work for civilians in Syria in dire circumstances.

Thirdly, all members of the Council regularly stress the importance of accountability for perpetrators who use chemical weapons. Yet the Council has not been able to move forward on that issue for months owing to one permanent member's use of the veto. We have been unable to tackle this crisis because one permanent member is a direct party to the conflict and has proved that it will defend the Syrian regime at all costs. We must intensify our efforts to establish a mechanism that can continue the meticulous work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and investigate and identify perpetrators independently of the politics in the Council. The JIM has identified both the Syrian regime and a non-State actor as responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. As I said last week (see S/PV.8221), the discontinuation of the JIM mandate cannot be the end of the story — all the more so because since the JIM ceased to operate, we have received reports that the regime has carried out at least six more chemical-weapon attacks and perhaps even more. For those who claim that chemical-weapon attacks have not taken place or that such accounts have been fabricated, I have a clear message. The establishment of an effective, impartial and independent attribution and accountability mechanism must not be vetoed.

Let us not forget that the United Nations is bigger than the Council alone. We have strong leadership at the helm of Organization and a powerful General

Assembly. Both must consider all instruments to advance accountability for the use of chemical weapons. The work should build on the important work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission and the JIM. We welcome the Fact-finding Mission's immediate investigation of the terrible incident in Douma this weekend. It should be given full access and cooperation by all parties. We reiterate our strong support for, first, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011; secondly, the Commission of Inquiry; thirdly, the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, initiated by France; and fourthly, a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court in The Hague as the most appropriate path to accountability and justice.

In conclusion, the Council must act. The OPCW Fact-finding Mission must complete an investigation as soon as possible, and there can be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons. To do otherwise is tantamount to condoning such appalling attacks, failing in our responsibilities and undermining the international architecture that we have collectively designed to stop such attacks. It is time for the Council and the international community as a whole to act.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank Mr. De Mistura and Mr. Markram for their briefings.

Almost exactly one year ago, I stood on the floor of the Security Council and held up pictures of dead Syrian children (see S/PV.7915). After that day, I prayed that I would never have to do that again. I could; there are many truly gruesome pictures. Many of us have worked hard to ensure that one day we would not have to see images of babies gassed to death in Syria. However, the day we prayed would never come, has come again. Chemical weapons have once again been used on Syrian men, women and children. And once again, the Security Council is meeting in response.

This time I am not going to hold up pictures of victims. I could; there are many, and they are gruesome. Worse are the videos imprinted in our minds that no one should ever have to see. I could hold up pictures of babies lying dead next to their mothers, brothers and sisters — even toddlers and infants still in diapers, all lying together dead. Their skin is the ashen blue that is now tragically familiar from chemical-weapon scenes. Their eyes are open and lifeless, with white foam bubbles at their mouths and noses. They are pictures of dead Syrians who are unarmed, not soldiers and fit the very definition of innocent and non-threatening. Rather, they are women and children who were hiding in basements from a renewed assault by Bashar Al-Assad. They are of families who were hiding underground to escape Al-Assad's conventional bombs and artillery, but the basements that Syrian families thought would shelter them from conventional bombs were the worst place to be when chemical weapons fell from the sky. Saturday evening, the basements of Douma became their tombs.

It is impossible to know for certain how many have died, because access to Douma is cut off by Al-Assad's forces. Dozens are dead that we know of, and hundreds are wounded. I could hold up pictures of survivors — children with burning eyes and choking for breath. I could hold up pictures of first responders washing the chemicals off of the victims and putting respirators on children, or of first responders walking through room after room of families lying motionless with babies still in the arms of their mothers and fathers. I could show pictures of a hospital attacked with chemical weapons. I could show pictures of hospitals struck by barrel bombs following the chemical attack. Ambulances and rescue vehicles have been repeatedly attacked, maximizing the number of dead civilians. Civil defence centres have been attacked in order to paralyse the medical response so as to increase the suffering of the survivors. Who does that? Only a monster does that. Only a monster targets civilians, and then ensures that there are no ambulances to transfer the wounded, no hospitals to save their lives and no doctors or medicine to ease their pain.

I could hold up pictures of all of that killing and suffering for the Council to see, but what would be the point? The monster who was responsible for those attacks has no conscience, not even to be shocked by pictures of dead children. The Russian regime, whose hands are all covered in the blood of Syrian children, cannot be ashamed by pictures of its victims. We have tried that before. We must not overlook Russia and Iran's roles in enabling the Al-Assad regime's murderous destruction. Russia and Iran have military advisers at Al-Assad's airfields and operation centres. Russian officials are on the ground helping direct the

regime's starve-and-surrender campaign, and Iranian allied forces do much of the dirty work.

When the Syrian military pummels civilians, they rely on the military hardware given by Russia. Russia could stop that senseless slaughter if it wanted, but it stands with the Al-Assad regime and supports without any hesitation. What is the point of trying to shame such people? After all, no civilized Government would have anything to do with Al-Assad's murderous regime. Pictures of dead children mean little to Governments like Russia, who expend their own resources to prop up Al-Assad.

The Council, which saw the pictures last year, has failed to act because Russia has stood in its way every single time. For a year we have allowed Russia to hold the lives of innocent Syrians hostage to its alliance with the Al-Assad regime. That also allowed Russian to weaken the credibility of the United Nations. We are quick to condemn chemical weapons in the Security Council, but then Russia prevents any action. It vetoed five draft resolutions on this issue alone and used 11 vetoes all together to save Al-Assad. Our lives go on as usual.

The Council created the Joint Investigative Mechanism. It found the Syrian regime responsible for the attack at Khan Shaykhun a year ago. Because Russia supported Al-Assad and his actions, Russia killed the Mechanism. We condemned it, and our lives went on as usual. We pushed for a ceasefire. The Council unanimously agreed, but it was immediately ignored by Russia and Al-Assad. We condemned it, and our lives went on as usual. Now here we are, confronted with the consequences of giving Russia a pass in the name of unity — a unity that Russia has shown many times before it does not want. Here we are, in a world where chemical-weapons use is becoming normalized — from an Indonesian airport to an English village to the homes and hospitals of Syria. Since the Al-Assad regime used chemical weapons at Khan Shaykhun one year ago, chemical weapons have been reportedly used dozens of times, and the Council does nothing.

What we are dealing with today is not about a spat between the United States and Russia. It is about the inhumane use of chemical agents on innocent civilians. Each and every one of the nations in the Council is on record opposing the use of chemical weapons. There can be no more rationalizations for our failure to act. We have already introduced and circulated to the Council a draft resolution demanding unrestricted humanitarian access to the people of Douma. Al-Assad is doing all he can to assure maximum suffering in Douma. Our priority must be to help the starving, the sick and the injured who have been left behind. We also call on the Council to immediately re-establish a truly professional and impartial mechanism for chemical-weapons attacks in Syria, including the attack this weekend. We hope that our colleagues on the Council will join us, as they have before.

That is a very minimum we can do in response to the attack we just witnessed. Russia's obstructionism will not continue to hold us hostage when we are confronted with an attack like that one. The United States is determined to see the monster who dropped chemical weapons on the Syrian people held to account. Those present have heard what the President of the United States has said about that. Meetings are ongoing. Important decisions are being weighed, even as we speak. We are on the edge of a dangerous precipice. The great evil of chemical-weapons use, which once unified the world in opposition, is on the verge of becoming the new normal. The international community must not let that happen. We are beyond showing pictures of dead babies. We are beyond appeals to conscience. We have reached the moment when the world must see justice done. History will record this as the moment when the Security Council either discharged its duty or demonstrated its utter and complete failure to protect the people of Syria. Either way, the United States will respond.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Peruvian presidency for having convened this emergency Security Council meeting, at the request of France, together with eight other Council members. I also wish to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Thomas Markram, for their insightful briefings.

There are times in the lives of nations where what is essential is at stake: life or death; peace or war; civilization or barbarism; the international order or chaos. That is the case today following the dreadful chemical carnage that once again pushed the boundaries of horror on Saturday in Douma. We are aware that two new and particularly serious chemical-weapons attacks took place in Douma on 7 April. The provisional toll of human life is appalling. There are nearly 50 dead, including a number of children, and 1,000 wounded.

That toll is likely to be even higher, as assistance cannot reach some areas. Once again, toxic substances have been dropped to asphyxiate, to kill and to terrorize civilians, reaching them even in the basements where they sought refuge. Chlorine gas has the particular characteristic of being a heavy gas, capable of entering basements. For that reason, it is used. That is the level of deadly cynicism that has been reached in Syria.

There are no words to describe the horror of the images that surfaced on 7 April, nearly one year after the Khan Shaykhun attack, which killed nearly 80 people. What we see in the thousands of photos and videos that surfaced in the course of several hours after the 7 April attacks reminds us of the images we have seen far too often: children and adults suffocating due to exposure to concentrated chlorine gas. What we also see are people suffering from violent convulsions, excessive salivation and burning eyes, all of which are symptomatic of exposure to a potent neurotoxin mixed with chlorine to heighten the lethal effect. As I mentioned, in total more than 1,000 people were exposed to that deadly chemical compound.

The experience and the successive reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism leave no room for doubt as to the perpetrators of this most recent attack. Only the Syrian armed forces and their agencies have the requisite knowledge to develop such sophisticated toxic substances with such a high degree of lethality. And only the Syrian armed forces and its agencies have a military interest in their use. This attack took place in Douma, an area that has been subjected to relentless shelling by the Syrian armed and air forces for several weeks. Unfortunately, the use of such weapons enables much swifter tactical progress than conventional weapons.

We are all aware that the Syrian regime has already been identified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism as the party responsible for the use, on at least four occasions, of chlorine and sarin gas as a chemical weapon. There are no illusions as to the sincerity of the declaration delivered by Syria on the state of its chemical stockpiles in 2013. Unfortunately, we once again we have proof in the form of empirical evidence. This dovetails with the regime's strategy of terror against civilians. We have already experienced this. At the worst, this is bad faith or, even worse, complicity. The Damascus regime clearly seeks, by sowing terror, to accelerate the capture of other urban areas that it wishes to control. What could be more effective to prompt those who resist the regime to flee than sieges, a tactic worthy of the Middle Ages, in addition to chemical terror. Let us make no mistake: the children frozen in an agonizing death are not so-called collateral victims. They are deliberate targets of these chemical attacks, designed and planned for the purpose of waging terror. The Damascus regime is conducting State terrorism, with its litany of war crimes and even crimes against humanity.

The offensive and the shelling conducted by the regime, as well as by its Russian and Iranian allies, over the past 48 hours prove the degree to which they have engaged in a military race without any consideration of the human cost. This latest escalation of violence, punctuated by a new instance of the use of chemical weapons, brings us face to face with the destructive madness of a diehard regime that seeks to destroy its people completely. And that regime's Russian and Iranian allies are either unable or unwilling to stop it. We are aware of the fact, and the Russian authorities have confirmed this on several occasions, that Russian military forces have a presence on the ground and in the air in eastern Ghouta. On 7 April, as the second chemical attack took place in Douma, Russian aircraft were also taking part in air operations in the Damascus region. Russian and Iranian military support is present on the ground and at all levels of the Syrian war machinery. No Syrian aircraft takes off without the Russian ally being informed. These attacks took place either with the tacit or explicit consent of Russia or despite its reluctance and military presence. I do not know which is more alarming when it comes to our collective security.

The stakes revolving around this recent attack are extremely grave. This is the latest proof of the normalization of chemical weapons use, which we should attribute not only to a regime that has become uncontrollable and continues to gas civilians with complete impunity, but also to its supporters, including a permanent member of the Security Council. That member failed in its commitment to implement resolution 2118 (2013), which it, itself, co-sponsored. That member's responsibility in the endless tragedy that is the war in Syria is overwhelming.

France therefore of course turns towards Russia today in order to put forward two demands. The first demand is a cessation of hostilities and the establishment of an immediate ceasefire in Syria, in line with resolution 2401 (2018), adopted on 24 February,

which to date has never been upheld by the Damascus regime. France deeply deplores the fact that, although it was unanimously adopted, it was not possible to implement that resolution, which provides for a truce and emergency humanitarian access. The second demand is the establishment of a new international investigative mechanism that will be able to document all of the factors of the attack in Douma and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. The end of the Joint Investigative Mechanism last November due to two successive Russian vetoes has stripped us of an essential tool of deterrence. For that reason, we support any initiative to bridge that gap. And in that spirit France has committed to a partnership to combat impunity for the use of chemical weapons. In that same spirit, we endorse the draft resolution that has been put forward today by the United States.

With this attack the Al-Assad regime is testing yet again the determination of the international community to ensure compliance with the prohibition against chemica-weapons use. Our response must be united, robust and implacable. That response must make it clear that the use of chemical weapons against civilians will no longer be tolerated, and that those who flout that fundamental rule of our collective security will be held accountable and must face the consequences. The Al-Assad regime needs to hear an international response, and France stands ready to fully shoulder its role alongside its partners.

Ultimately, we know that only an inclusive political solution will bring an end to the seven-year conflict, which has claimed the lives of 500,000 people and pushed millions to take the route of exile. That is why France will remain fully committed alongside the United Nations Special Envoy and in line with the Geneva process. However, in the light of this most recent carnage, we can no longer merely repeat words. Without being followed up by deeds, such words would be meaningless. I wish to reiterate here what President Macron has stressed on several occasions: France will assume its full responsibility in the fight against the proliferation of chemical weapons. France's position is clear. It will uphold its commitments and keep its word.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and Mr. Markram for their briefings. I also thank all the United Nations teams on the ground for the important and incredibly difficult work they do.

As Staffan de Mistura said, this is an important Security Council meeting. My Government shares the outrage that other colleagues have eloquently described today. It is truly horrific to think of victims and families sheltered underground when the chlorine found them.

This is the third time in five days that the Council has convened to discuss chemical weapons. This is dreadful in the true sense of that word. The Council should dread what we risk happening — for chemical weapons to become a routine part of fighting. As one of the five permanent members of the Council (P-5), the United Kingdom believes that we have a particular responsibility to uphold the worldwide prohibition on the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). We agree with the Netherlands Ambassador that the P-5 has specific responsibilities. I believe that four members of the P-5 do believe that, but there is one that does not. The Russian Ambassador referred to a resurgence of the Cold War. This is not the Cold War. In the Cold War there was not this flagrant disregard for the prohibitions that are universal on the use of WMDs.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General also referred to the risks of escalation, and to international peace and security more broadly. We share his fears, but it is the Syrian Government and its backers, Iran and Russia, who are prolonging the fighting and risking regional and wider instability. There are real questions about what is happening in the T-4 airbase, with its foreign fighters and its mercenaries.

We have been challenged today by our Russian colleague to say why we believe the attack was carried out by Syria and why we believe, further, that chemical weapons were used. The reasons are as follows. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism found six uses of chemical weapons between 2014 and 2017. Two it ascribed to Da'esh for the use of mustard gas, three it ascribed to the regime for the use of chlorine and one further use it ascribed to the Syrian regime for the use of sarin. That is the attacks that we talked about in the Council just last week at Khan Sheykhoun, which led to the United States strike — which we support — on Al-Shayrat. In addition, as the French Ambassador has said, we had reports of Russian and Syrian warnings before the chemical-weapon attack took place and of a pattern of Mi-8 Hip helicopters flying overhead. Those reports have come from the ground.

I listened carefully to the Russian Ambassador's argument. As I have just set out, we, as the United Kingdom believe that the Syrian regime is responsible for these latest attacks. But there is one way to settle this — to have an independent fact-finding mission followed by an independent investigation — as we all know that fact-finding missions are there to determine whether chemical weapons have been used and, if they have been used, what sort of chemical weapons. But only an investigation can determine who is responsible for their use, and therefore start the path to accountability.

I was very interested to hear the Russian offer that an OPCW fact-finding mission could visit and would have the protection of Russian forces. I believe that this is an offer worth pursuing, but it would, of course, be necessary for the OPCW mission to have complete freedom of action and freedom of access. That still leaves us with the question of who committed these atrocities. That is why we support the United States text for a draft resolution and we believe that there is no legitimate reason not to support the call for the Council to set up an independent investigative mechanism. As I said before, we have nothing to hide, but it appears that Russia, Syria and their supporters, Iran, do have something to fear.

The Russian Ambassador singled out the United Kingdom, the United States and France for criticism. I would like, if I may, to turn to that. The responsibility for the cruelty in Syria belongs to Syria and its backers — Russia and Iran. The use of chemical weapons is an escalatory and diabolical act. It strikes me that what Russia is trying to do is to turn the debate in the Council away from the discussion of the use of chemical weapons into a dispute between East and West, presenting itself as the victim. It is far too important to play games with the politics between East and West in respect of chemical weapons. Russia's crocodile tears for the people of eastern Ghouta has an easy answer. It is to join us in the non-political attempt to get in humanitarian and protection workers from the United Nations to do their job of looking after and mitigating the risk to civilians. Russia's concern about attribution for the use of chemical weapons also has an easy answer. It is to join us in allowing the United Nations to set up an international investigative mechanism to pursue the responsible parties. I repeat here the two demands of my French colleague, and I hope we will be able to make progress.

I had not intended to address the Skripal case in Salisbury, but since my Russian colleague has done so, I will address it today. He asked what the similarities were between Salisbury and Syria. I think it is important that I point out that the cases are different in the following respects. First, there is a thorough investigation under way in Salisbury. As we have heard, there is no investigation under way in Syria. The British Government in Salisbury is seeking to protect its people, as is its duty. The Syrian Government, on the contrary, as we have heard today, attacks and gasses its people. I am sorry to say that what the two do have in common though, is Russia's refusal to assume P-5 responsibilities to prevent the use of WMDs and its reckless support for the use of WMDs by its agents and by its allies.

It is not we who want to alienate Russia. It alienates herself by not joining in the vast majority of the Council who wish to find a non-polemical way through and to address the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria. The Russian Ambassador mentioned friends of the United States. My Government and its people are proud to be a friend of the United States. We stand with everyone on the Council who wants to find a way through the chemical weapons problem, to have a proper fact-finding mission and to have a proper investigation as the first step to bringing this dreadful conflict to a close.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Special Envoy de Mistura and the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Markram, for their briefings. China takes note of the reports alleging that chemical weapons were once again used in Syria and caused civilian casualties. That is of great concern to China.

China's position on chemical-weapons has been consistent and clear. We are firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any State, organization or individual under any circumstances. Any use of chemical weapons, whenever and wherever, must not be tolerated. China supports a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation of the incident concerned so that it can reach a conclusion based on substantiated evidence that can stand the test of history and facts so that the perpetrators and responsible parties can be brought to justice.

The Syrian chemical-weapons issue is closely linked to to a political settlement of the Syrian situation. China

supports the ongoing important role of the Security Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the main channels for dealing with the Syrian chemical-weapons issue. We hope that the parties concerned will take a constructive approach so as to seek a solution through consultations, establish the facts, prevent any further use of chemical weapons, preserve the unity of the Security Council and cooperate with the efforts by the parties concerned to advance the political process in Syria.

The Syrian conflict has entered its eighth year and is inflicting tremendous suffering on the Syrian people. A political settlement is the only solution to the Syrian issue. The international community must remain committed to a political settlement of the question of Syria, while fully respecting its sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

China has always opposed the use or threat of force in international affairs. We always advocate adherence to the Charter of the United Nations. All parties should increase their support for the United Nations mediation efforts and compel the parties in Syria to seek a political settlement under the principle of Syrian leadership and ownership in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015).

The fight against terrorism is an important and urgent issue in the political settlement of the Syrian question. The international community must strengthen its coordination, uphold uniform standards and combat all terrorist groups identified as such by the Security Council.

At a recent Security Council meeting, China set out its principled position with regard to the Skripal incident (see S/PV.8224). China believes that the parties concerned should strictly comply with their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and, in line with the relevant provisions of the Convention, carry out a comprehensive, impartial and objective investigation and deal with the issues concerned within the framework of the OPCW. China hopes that the parties concerned will work in accordance with the principles of mutual respect and equality, engage in consultations, cooperate, avoid politicization and measures that might further exacerbate tensions and resolve their differences properly through dialogue.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura and Mr. Thomas Markram for their briefings this afternoon. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for acceding to our request for an emergency meeting.

We are dismayed by the general escalation of violence in Syria, as described today by Staffan de Mistura, in clear violation of the various resolutions, including resolution 2401 (2018). In that regard, I want to plea with the Syrian authorities represented in the Chamber and with the Astana guarantors to live up to the Security Council's resolutions.

We asked for this meeting today because over the weekend we were yet again faced with horrifying allegations of chemical-weapons attacks in Syria, this time in Douma, just outside Damascus. There are worrying reports of a large number of civilian casualties, including women and children. The graphic material that has been shared is beyond repugnant. We are alarmed by those extremely serious allegations. There must now be an immediate, independent and thorough investigation.

Let me reiterate that Sweden supports all international efforts to combat the use and proliferation of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors anywhere in the world. We unequivocally condemn in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons, including in Syria. It is a serious violation of international law and constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The use of chemical weapons in armed conflict is always prohibited and amounts to a war crime. Those responsible must be held accountable. We cannot accept impunity.

Addressing the use of chemical weapons in Syria has become a central test of the credibility of the Council. How we respond to the most recent reports from Douma is therefore decisive. Despite the odds, we must put aside our differences and come together. Now is the time to show unity. In our view, the following needs to happen.

First, we must condemn in the strongest terms the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Secondly, our immediate priority must be to investigate the worrying reports from Douma. In that context, we welcome the announcement by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that the Fact-finding Mission for Syria — to which we reiterate our full support — is in the process of gathering information from all available sources. We express our hope that the Fact-finding Mission can be urgently deployed to Syria.

Thirdly, all States, as well as the parties to the conflict, including the Syrian authorities, must fully cooperate with the Fact-finding Mission. What is particularly needed is safe and unhindered access to the site in Douma, as well as any information and evidence deemed relevant by the Fact-finding Mission to conduct its independent investigation.

Fourthly, we need to urgently redouble our efforts in the Council to agree on a new independent and impartial attributive mechanism to identify those responsible for chemical-weapons use.

Finally, if the allegations of chemical-weapons use are indeed confirmed and those responsible are eventually identified, the perpetrators must be held to account.

We are ready to work actively and constructively with other members for urgent Council action. To that end, we have circulated elements as input to our discussions. We must immediately engage in consultations in order to break the current deadlock and to shoulder our responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations. We owe that to the many victims of the crimes committed in this conflict.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Allow me to thank Special Envoy Mr. Staffan de Mistura and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Mr. Thomas Markham for their important briefings.

We are horrified by the news of another deadly attack in eastern Ghouta, which took place on Saturday evening. Dozens of people perished as a result of a vicious act of violence against civilians in Douma. The available information about the symptoms of the victims affirm that they are consistent with those caused by a chemical agent.

Poland condemns that barbaric attack, and expects that it will be possible to hold the perpetrators accountable. No military or political goal can justify the extermination of innocent vulnerable people, especially those seeking help in medical facilities. That atrocious crime seems to be a cynical response to the debates in the Council last week, when we commemorated the first anniversary of the attack in Khan Shaykun (see S/PV.8221).

We call on the actors affecting the situation in Syria, especially the Russian Federation and Iran, to take all the necessary actions to prevent any further use of weapons of mass destruction and to achieve the full cessation of hostilities in the whole territory of Syria. We insist that all parties to the conflict comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

As has been stated many times by members of the Council, as well as United Nations officials and European Union representatives, it is highly regrettable that the renewal of the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism was vetoed, thereby allowing those responsible for the subsequent chemical attacks to remain unpunished. Today we face the results of that impunity, witnessing further attacks against civilians with the use of chemicals as weapons.

We urge all our partners in the Council to engage in a serious discussion in good faith in order to re-establish an accountability mechanism for chemical attacks in Syria. That is the minimum that we owe the victims of Ghouta, Khan Shaykun, Al-Lataminah and the numerous other places where chemical weapons have been used.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We would like to thank Special Envoy De Mistura and Mr. Thomas Markram for their briefings.

Reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma on Saturday and the videos and pictures that we saw through media outlets are indeed very worrisome. It is also deeply disturbing that such reports of the use of chemical weapons have continued in the ongoing military activities in Syria. As we have repeatedly stated, we strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons by any actor under any circumstances. There is no justification whatsoever for the use of chemical weapons. Those responsible for these inhuman acts must be identified and held accountable. This is absolutely vital, not only for the sake of the victims of chemical weapons in Syria but also for maintaining international peace and security and for preserving the non-proliferation architecture.

As the Secretary-General said in his 8 April statement, cited by the Special Envoy earlier, any use of chemical weapons, if confirmed, is abhorrent and requires a thorough investigation. That includes the need to establish accountability — something on which the Council has yet to achieve consensus. In the meantime, we believe the reported use of chemical weapons in Douma, and in other parts of Syria, should be investigated by the Fact-finding Mission, and all parties should extend full cooperation in that

regard, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

While we all agree that accountability is indispensable for deterring and stopping the use of chemical weapons in Syria and beyond, there is currently, as has already be said, no independent, impartial and professional investigative mechanism that could identify those individuals, entities, State or non-State actors that use chemical weapons in the country. In that regard, the Council should recover its unity and engage in a positive and constructive discussion that could address the existing institutional lacunae.

We all know that the threats to international peace and security we face today are becoming increasingly more complex by the day. We are seeing that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is posing a real danger and that the international norms on the use of chemical weapons are also being undermined. Since the end of the Cold War, the trust among major Powers has never been so low as it is currently, which has enormous implications not only for global peace and security but also for the transformative agenda that we have set for ourselves in the development sphere. We cannot think of making any meaningful headway towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals without creating the necessary global security environment. At the moment, we really cannot say that this is an environment conducive to making any progress on that account.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, it has not been able to effectively address the new and emerging threats and challenges to peace and security that we are facing today. It has been all the more apparent that the lack of unity and cohesion among members is undermining the credibility of the Council. Perhaps we, the elected members, have to look for ways and means to have a greater impact, with a view to contributing to increasing the Council's effectiveness. Without dialogue among the major Powers to build the necessary trust and understanding, it will be extremely difficult to address some of the most difficult and complex security challenges we have ever seen, including the situation in Syria.

Things are in fact bound to get even worse unless something is done. We cannot afford to bury our heads in the sand. The dangers are very palpable. That is why every opportunity should be seized. That is also why we consider the news about the upcoming summit-level meetings being planned to be encouraging. We can only hope that those meetings will help to defuse tensions and allow for serious discussions to take place with a view to finding a common approach to tackling current threats and challenges. The sooner those discussions happen, the better for preserving global peace and stability, which, as we speak, is becoming a source of extremely great concern. In fact, I am understating the magnitude of the potential danger we are facing.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): The Ivorian delegation thanks Mr. De Mistura and Mr. Markram for their respective briefings on the latest developments in Syria, after the resumption of fighting in Douma and eastern Ghouta and the bombing of the city of Damascus, following the relative calm of recent weeks. My delegation would like to focus its statement on three main points.

First, we remain deeply concerned about recent reports of chemical-weapons attacks against innocent civilian populations, which have reportedly resulted in numerous casualties who have shown symptoms of exposure to a chemical agent. While reaffirming its categorical rejection of any use or resort to chemical weapons, be it in times of peace or in times of war, Côte d'Ivoire strongly condemns such acts and calls for these events to be placed under an intense spotlight, with the contribution of all stakeholders.

In the face of allegations of recurrent use of chemical weapons by the warring parties in the Syrian conflict, the Ivorian delegation stresses that it is more important than ever that the international community send a strong signal to show, beyond the usual principled condemnations, its determination to put a definitive end to this infernal cycle.

The use of chemical weapons violates the most fundamental norms of international law and poses threats to our collective security. That is why we must engage in a unflagging fight against impunity in the use of chemical weapons and preserving the international chemical non-proliferation regime, which is one of the fundamental pillars of our common security.

My second point concerns the need for the international community to put in place a mechanism for accountability and for the fight against impunity for those who use chemical weapons, in order to put an end to the repeated use of these weapons. In that regard, the Ivorian delegation expresses its readiness to work

towards the establishment of such a mechanism and calls on the Council to return to the unity it had when it established the Joint Investigative Mechanism, whose mandate unfortunately could not be renewed despite our common efforts.

Thirdly, Côte d'Ivoire notes with regret that resolution 2401 (2018), which remains the framework for our joint action, has not been implemented and that the humanitarian situation in Syria has further deteriorated. In the light of the distress of the civilian populations trapped in the fighting, the urgency for a cessation of hostilities remains more relevant than ever. In the face of the deteriorating situation, my country would like once again to call on all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities and to respect international humanitarian law, including unhindered humanitarian access to persons in distress, in accordance with resolution 2401 (2018).

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its conviction that the solution to the crisis in Syria cannot be military. Only an inclusive political process can put a definitive end to this conflict. Such a political solution must be in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015) and imbued with the results of the Geneva negotiations. My country believes that the Geneva talks remain the right framework for achieving a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura and Mr. Thomas Markram and their respective teams for their exhaustive briefings.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses its gratitude to the French Republic and to the other members of the Council that called for the convening of this afternoon's meeting. We also thank the President of the Security Council for having decided to hold this afternoon's meeting under the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security: The situation in the Middle East". This is an appropriate topic, since recent events in the Middle East represent a genuine threat to peace and security, not only in that region but at the international level as well. From the protests in the Gaza Strip, with their loss of human lives, to the missile attacks on Syria, as well as the horrendous chemical weapons attack in the Syrian town of Douma, those are all situations of deep concern for the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

This past weekend we awoke to news that added a new low to the saddest and bloodiest episodes of the Syrian conflict. According to reports published in the international media, on 7 April, in the Syrian town of Douma in eastern Ghouta, more than 40 people, mostly women and girls, died from asphyxiation caused by inhaling a poison gas.

As we heard in this Chamber on 4 April from the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Thomas Markram (see S/PV.8221), the conclusions and recommendations of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic are not binding and do not attribute responsibilities in the case of evidence of the use of chemical substances prohibited under the relevant international treaties. In the light of that fact, we take this opportunity to recall the obligation of all parties to take essential steps towards the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), and we underscore the need to establish an independent investigation mechanism of the United Nations whose task should be focused on preventing impunity, identifying those responsible and preventing future attacks to the best of its abilities.

As far as the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is concerned, no use of chemical weapons should go uninvestigated or unpunished. As a result, the alarming information coming out of Syria, especially that pertaining to the use of chemical weapons targeting civilians, both the case of Douma, which we are discussing today, as well as similar events in the past, must be investigated exhaustively, fairly, objectively and independently by international bodies in accordance with OPCW standards. The results of such investigations must be made public and those responsible must answer for their crimes before the implacable face of justice.

The fact that chemical substances continue to be used, especially against civilians, is cause for serious concern to the Government of Equatorial Guinea. During the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, condemned in the strongest terms the use, manufacture, possession and distribution of chemical weapons in armed conflicts (see A/72/PV.13). It is worth recalling that no member of the Council should be considered exempt from that obligation, which also reflects Chapter I of the Charter of the

United Nations, which enshrines the determination of Member States to build a world of peace and ensure the well-being of humankind.

The Security Council now finds itself at a crossroads with respect to its options. It can either strengthen the presence of international forces with a view to future military intervention, as some military Powers have been suggesting, or we can pursue international negotiations, be they in Geneva, Astana, Sochi or Ankara. However, history continues to teach us that military interventionism has never resolved conflicts; rather, it exacerbates and entrenches them, sowing desolation and ruin in its wake.

As far as the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is concerned, the only solution to the Syrian conflict is to be found in the words spoken yesterday by Pope Francis in the traditional Sunday mass in Saint Peter's Square in the Vatican:

> "There is no such thing as a good war and a bad war. Nothing, but nothing, can justify the use of such instruments of extermination on defenseless people and populations ... military and political leaders choose another path, that of negotiations, which is the only one that can bring about peace and not death and destruction."

In conclusion, we reiterate the appeal made by the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to the countries and actors with influence in Syria, as well as in Israel and Palestine, to wield that influence in order to force all parties involved in those conflicts to mitigate the suffering of their people and to sit down to negotiate to put an end to that chronic threat to international peace and security which persists in the Middle East.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Thomas Markram, for their briefings. We express our gratitude to Council members for initiating this emergency meeting, which we hope will lead to the launching of a timely and objective investigation of the incident in Douma.

We firmly believe that the Security Council remains the main and sole body authorized to counter threats to international peace and security. Unfortunately, the situation within the Council is becoming increasingly strained. In order to achieve an appropriate solution to these critical issues, it is of utmost importance that the Council act unanimously, in a balanced and pragmatic manner. To that end, we must demonstrate greater flexibility and negotiability, rising above our national interests in order to achieve peace and stability. Any controversy that involves prejudices and mutual accusations and lacks conclusive results and irrefutable evidence will have only a destructive effect and will not lead to the results that the world community expects from us.

With regard to the chemical attacks in Syria, we mourn together with the families of those killed and express our solidarity with them in the face of such atrocities, by which innocent civilians become victims of the relentless confrontation of the opposing parties. Kazakhstan has always taken a firm and resolute stand, uncompromisingly condemning any use of chemical weapons as the most heinous action and an unacceptable war crime.

With regard to the situation in Douma, we call for an investigation into this alleged incident to be carried out and for all the circumstances to be clarified as soon as possible. The Council has the great responsibility to act on verifiable facts, not only before the world community, but before ourselves. Furthermore, history itself will ultimately be the judge of our decisions. Therefore, we need to verify all the details of the incident. In that regard, we would like to draw attention to the following aspects.

First, are there any other reliable sources, in addition to White Helmets' claims, and who can verify the veracity of the assessments and testimonies of those sources? Some claim that the number of victims is 70, while others report that there were more than 150 victims and still others believe there were only 25 victims. Even one victim is too many. However, today, the Russian Federation denied the attack altogether. There are many allegations and assumptions regarding the very facts concerning the use of a toxic chemical substance.

Secondly, we consider it important to take into account the fact that the Government of Syria has repeatedly notified us and requested that we check its reports that a number of terrorist groups on the side of the opposition were making attempts to transfer chemical weapons and prepare chemical attacks on the territory of eastern Ghouta. Actually, these allegations have not been given due attention and we have had no opportunity to verify all the facts. We are not advocating for any side in this conflict, but rather demanding a full

and objective investigation on the basis of which we can make a thoughtful decision.

Thirdly, we believe that it is imperative to conduct an independent investigation. We again recall the urgent need for an investigative mechanism, the establishment of which depends on the permanent members of the Council. They must make every possible effort to find common ground on the issue. We urgently need objective and verifiable information, as well as an immediate, independent, transparent and unbiased investigation before any decision or action, unilateral or otherwise, is taken.

We fully support the proposal that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission be sent at the earliest. We are certain that the Syrian people are very interested in an objective investigation. Therefore, Damascus and opposing parties should provide all assistance and secure access for the speedy visit of the OPCW inspectors to the incident sites to collect facts on the ground.

Finally, we again call for the preservation and strengthening of the unity of the Council to reach a consensus-based decision to preserve peace and stability in the world.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we thank you, Mr. President, for the prompt convening of today's meeting. We were one of the countries that requested it.

We also thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for their briefings.

Since the beginning of this year, the State of Kuwait has occupied the Arab seat in the Security Council. One of our most important priorities, which we made clear before we joined it, is to defend and uphold Arab issues, voice the concerns about them and work to find peaceful solutions. We deeply deplore the lack of any real and genuine progress on any of these issues, in particular that of the Syrian crisis, which regrettably continues to deteriorate. Security Council resolutions on such issues are not implemented. The Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security but is unable to shoulder that responsibility. It is divided as it faces those dangers and threats. Therefore the crises continue, along with the suffering of the people in the region.

The State of Kuwait condemns in the strongest terms the heinous rocket and barrel bomb attacks against residential areas under siege in eastern Ghouta, including the latest attack on Douma, on 7 April. Five days ago we marked the first anniversary of the Khan Shaykhun incident (see S/PV.8221), in which chemical weapons were used, as confirmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. It also identified who used them.

Two days ago, scores of civilians, including children and women, were killed or injured in attacks and air strikes against Douma. Many cases of asphyxiation were recorded. Several international reports confirmed that the crimes committed in both incidents were tantamount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, which reminds us once again of the request we all made in the Chamber for the establishment of a new mechanism to determine whether or not and by whom chemical weapons had been used, and to hold the perpetrators in Syria accountable. The mechanism must guarantee impartial, transparent and professional investigations in all chemical attacks in Syria in order to end impunity. For the past five years — specifically, since August 2013 — the perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria have enjoyed impunity. They have not been punished, even when we witnessed the very first crime of the use of chemical weapons in eastern Ghouta.

We do not want to mark the first anniversary of the attack in Douma without a conviction. We call for the Council to establish an accountability mechanism that would determine the perpetrators of the chemical-weapons crimes anywhere in Syria — be they a Government, entity, group or individual — so that they can be held accountable in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2118 (2013). The Council must shoulder its responsibility with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. The use of chemical weapons in Syria is a genuine threat to the non-proliferation regime. The continued attacks against civilians in medical facilities and residential areas, through air strikes or artillery, are all flagrant violations of the international community's will and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2401 (2018), which demanded a 30-day ceasefire, at the very least, without delay.

The provisions of resolution 2118 (2013) are clear and definite. They call for accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. However, current events are a clear violation of the provisions of the resolution. As members of the Council, we cannot accept the status quo, which is the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is another disappointment for the Syrian people, whose suffering caused by the use of such weapons in different parts of Syria we have been unable to end.

The Council has a collective responsibility. The suffering Syrian people are sick and tired of tuning into meetings of the Council without seeing tangible results on the ground. At several junctures throughout this bloody conflict the Council has been able to find common ground to end the crisis. However, we must overcome our political differences and establish a new accountability mechanism in Syria that is professional, credible and impartial. Such elements are available in the draft resolution under discussion, which has been put forward by the United States. It includes updates on the incident in Douma. We call on all members of the Council to build on that draft as a good basis for negotiations on a future mechanism.

We continue to seek a political solution as the only means to end the crisis in all its dimensions. The political road map is clear and agreed, based on the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and on resolution 2254 (2015). It seeks to maintain the unity, independence and sovereignty of Syria and meet the legitimate aspirations and ambitions of the Syrian people towards living a dignified life.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for their briefings.

We are deeply concerned about the reported use of chemical weapons in the city of Douma. Bolivia reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical agents as weapons and considers it to be an unjustifiable criminal act. There can be no justification for their use, regardless of the circumstances or by whom they are used, as it constitutes a serious violation of international law and a grave threat to international peace and security.

We believe that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission, in line with its mandate, should verify in the most objective, methodological and technical manner the reported use of chemical weapons. Should their use be verified, it must be investigated in an effective and transparent manner in order to ensure that the perpetrators can be identified and tried by the appropriate bodies so as to prevent impunity. We therefore need an independent, impartial and representative entity that will conduct a comprehensive, credible and conclusive investigation. Our major challenge is to ensure that we do not politicize or exploit the Security Council for our own purposes.

We regret that so far there have been obstacles to the full implementation of resolution 2401 (2018), and we call on all the parties involved to make every effort to effectively implement it throughout Syrian territory. We emphatically reject the ongoing bombardments and indiscriminate attacks, especially those on civilian infrastructure such as health facilities, and we deplore all military activity in residential areas. Such actions only cause more displacements, injuries and deaths. We call on all the parties to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, including authorizing humanitarian access throughout Syria and to all persons in need, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We reiterate that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that the only option is an inclusive, negotiated and coordinated political process, led by the Syrian people for the Syrian people, aimed at enabling sustainable peace to be achieved in the area without any foreign pressure, as provided for in resolution 2254 (2015). We also reject any attempt at fragmentation or sectarianism in Syria.

Bolivia wants to once again make clear its firm rejection of the use of force or the threat of use of force. We also reject unilateral actions, which are illegal and contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, and undermine any effort to achieve a political solution.

Lastly, with regard to the events in the city of Salisbury, we reiterate the importance of conducting an independent, transparent and depoliticized investigation in accordance with current rules and regulations of international law, especially as set forth by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We believe that cooperation among the relevant parties will be essential to making progress through the appropriate diplomatic channels in solving the crime and strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We thank Mr. De Mistura and Mr. Markram for their briefings. Peru is deeply concerned about the new reports of the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria, including minors, in the town of Douma. In that regard, we note the urgent need for a thorough investigation. Peru condemns any use of chemical weapons wherever it may take place. We want to point out that it is a heinous crime, a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security and a violation both of the non-proliferation regime and international humanitarian law.

In the short term, we believe that the Syrian Government and all parties to the conflict, including countries with influence on the ground, should abide by and implement the humanitarian ceasefire that the Council provided for in resolution 2401 (2018), and to cooperate with the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. To that end, we once again reiterate the importance of establishing an independent and impartial accountability mechanism. The investigations should result in the prosecution and punishment of those responsible. The members of the Council cannot permit impunity.

We must also remember that any response to the conflict in Syria and the atrocities committed there must be conducted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Peru opposes any use or threat of use of force contrary to international law. We reiterate our deep concern about the serious consequences that the ongoing atrocities in the Syrian conflict may have for the stability of the Middle East and for an international order based on minimum standards of humanity and coexistence. In that regard, I would like to conclude by calling on the members of the Council to restore a sense of unity and the common good to our discharge of our high responsibilities. In the case of Syria, that means implementing the ceasefire and ensuring the effective protection of civilians, investigating and punishing atrocity crimes and resuming a serious process of political dialogue, based on resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), with a view to promoting the sustainable peace that the Syrian people so badly need.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Like my Dutch colleague and friend, I too have three points to make.

I would first like to respectfully request of my colleague Mrs. Nikki Haley, Permanent Representative of the United States, that from now on she refrain from labelling any legitimate Governments as "regimes". Right now I am referring specifically to Russia. I have made that request once before, but Ambassador Haley was not present, and I asked for it to be conveyed to her by her colleagues. Now I am requesting it personally. If it happens again, I will interrupt the meeting on a point of order.

Secondly, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom said that Syria is different from Salisbury in that there no investigation is being conducted in Syria, while one is under way in Salisbury. We would very much like to know more about the details of that investigation and would be grateful if she could communicate them to us. However, for the time being we know nothing other than that all of a sudden the alleged victims of a chemical warfare agent, thankfully, turn out to be alive and, apparently, almost completely well. However, nobody has seen them yet, and we fear for the condition of those important witnesses. At the moment, we have learned from newspaper reports, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has offered to shelter the Skripals in the United States under new identities. The CIA's participation in this is itself revealing. But it also means that we may never see these people, who are key witnesses to what happened, again.

What else do we know? We know about the speedy euthanization of the Skripals' pets and the cremation of the cat and dead guinea pigs. We are also aware of the intention to demolish their house and the restaurant and pub they visited. We also know that Yulia Skripal's sister, Viktoria, who wanted to see her, was denied a British visa. Why? That is all we know. I repeat that we would very much like to learn more details about what is going on, and we would be grateful to our British

colleagues if they could keep us regularly informed during the investigation.

Thirdly, and lastly, we did not meet here today to address the situation in Douma. The agenda item is entitled "Threats to international peace and security", although, needless to say, it was the situation regarding Douma and the so-called chemical attack that prompted the meeting. In today's meeting, as Mr. De Mistura mentioned and the Secretary-General has previously discussed, we are moving towards a dangerous area. Unfortunately, the people who are playing these dangerous games and spewing irresponsible threats do not understand that. Today we heard once again what we have already heard many times. None of our Western colleagues want to hear or listen to objective information. None of them has expressed any doubts about the one and only version that has been given of what transpired. So what is the point of an investigation? Why bother? They have accused Damascus of a chemical-weapon attack not just before any investigation has been carried out but before the incident was even known about.

They are not convinced by the information that we have provided today. They simply do not want to listen. We have already said that there are no witnesses to the use of chemical weapons at all. There are no traces of chemicals, no bodies, no injuries, no poisoning victims. Nobody went to the hospital. The footage was all clearly staged by the White Helmets. We demand that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) mission immediately visit Douma and the area of the alleged chemical weapons attack, interview the residents and medical staff and and collect soil samples. My British colleague said that only an investigation can establish who is to blame. We agree, except that did not stop her from blaming the so-called Syrian regime. Those two things do not really jibe. We insist that the OPCW mission visit Douma immediately. The Syrian authorities and Russian troops are ready to provide the necessary conditions for this to take place.

Lastly, we too wish there were an independent investigative mechanism. I would like to remind the Council that our draft resolution, which includes a proposal for establishing such a mechanism, is in blue, and we are ready to adopt it today, if necessary.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I apologize for taking the floor again, but I want to clarify something. The Russian Ambassador's English is far too good for him not to have understood me when I spoke on 5 April (see S/PV.8224). The investigation of the Salisbury incident that is under way is an independent police investigation, and the United Kingdom will be very pleased to update the Council as and when we have something to say.

If I may, I would like to add one more thing. The other difference between Salisbury and Syria is that the United Kingdom is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention in good standing, and the Syrian Government has not complied with its obligations as certified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The American representative said that Russia spends its resources to support what she calls the regime in Syria. My question to her is: What does the United States spend its resources on in Syria? Does it spend its resources providing milk and medicine to Syrian children, or on providing weapons and munitions to its terrorist groups, which have committed the most heinous crimes against the Syrian people? Or is it spending resources on the its alliance's aircraft, which have wreaked destruction in many places in Syria, particularly in the city of Raqqa? What about the continuous threats that are made against my country at nearly every meeting of the Security Council on this issue? Does she acknowledge that her Administration has no respect for the Security Council, this international Organization or the principles of international law?

Let us test the credibility of what my colleague the United States Ambassador said. I ask members to note that I do not refer to the American Administration as the "American regime" because that would be legally shameful in this Chamber. Let us test the credibility of what my colleague the American Ambassador said when she asked the Security Council to act in order to achieve justice in Syria. Well, my test is to request that her Administration and her country allow the disclosure of the results of the United Nations Special Commission that investigated the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq for 18 years. The Commission was headed for some time by a Swede, Mr. Hans Blix.

As Council members know, after 18 years of investigation the Commission found no chemical weapons in Iraq. Nor did they find Coca-Cola or Pepsi Cola. Nevertheless, in a semi-confidential meeting towards the end of 2008, the Security Council decided to end the Commission's work and bury its archives in iron boxes. I repeat — it decided to bury its archives in iron boxes. Only the Secretary-General knows the code that opens those boxes. There was one condition, which was that the boxes could not be opened for 60 years. What is so shameful in those archives? Why did they have to be buried in boxes that cannot be opened for 60 years? That question is directed to the American Ambassador.

The Government of my country condemns in the strongest terms the ruthless Israeli aggression that took place this morning on the T-4 airbase in Homs governorate, in which a number of civilians were killed and injured. It was a flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and of various Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism, and would not have occurred were it not for the American Administration's unlimited and consistent support for Israel. The American Administration guarantees Israel immunity so that it will not be held accountable in the Council. That allows Israel to continue to practice State terrorism and to threaten peace and security in the region and beyond. Of course, Western countries did not even mention the Israeli aggression in their statements today, which shows that the Governments of their countries are complicit in it and are covering for it. Unfortunately, my dear friend Mr. De Mistura did not hear Netanyahu say this morning that it was Israel that launched the attack. That is why I was surprised when he said that the United Nations has not been able to verify the identity of its perpetrators. If Netanyahu himself says that he launched this aggression, why does Mr. De Mistura not refer to Israel as the aggressor?

This Israeli aggression is an indirect response to the successes of the Syrian Arab Army in expelling armed terrorist groups from the suburbs of Damascus, its rural area and other Syrian territory. Those groups have been killing the Syrian people, kidnapping civilians, detaining them and using them as human shields. They targeted Damascus alone with 3,000 missiles over the course of three months, killing 155 martyrs and injuring 865 civilians, most of them women and children. The Syrian Government underscores that the repeated Israeli aggression did not and will not protect Israeli agents operating within terrorist groups, nor will it divert the attention of the Syrian Army from its decisive military achievements in combating terrorism.

The American anti-racism activist Martin Luther King Jr. said that "a lie is like a snowball: the further you roll it the bigger it becomes". It would seem that this wise saying holds true at any time and at any place. The Governments of some countries lie incessantly. Fortunately, though, they have not quite perfected the details of their web of lies, much like the famous Baron Munchausen of German literature. How many roosters truly believe that sunrise is the result of crowing?

Some permanent members have become professional liars, and that in itself is a weapon of mass destruction. Through their lies, Palestine was stolen. The lies of these countries fuelled the war in the Korean peninsula. Through their lies, they invaded Viet Nam. Through their lies, they invaded Grenada. Through their lies, they destroyed Yugoslavia. Through their lies, they occupied Iraq. Through their lies, they destroyed Libya. Through their lies, they created takfiri terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Da'esh, Al-Nusra Front, Jaysh Al-Islam — and the list goes on and on. Through their lies, the same countries are trying to defeat Syria and prepare the ground for an assault today.

It is worth noting that the today's negative statement of the United States representative is in absolute contradiction with a statement made by United States Secretary of Defence General Mattis in an interview with *Newsweek* two days ago with journalist Ian Wilkie. Mr. Wilkie used the following title for the interview: "Now Mattis Admits There Was No Evidence Assad Used Poison Gas on His People." That was said by the American Defence Secretary, not the Syrian Defence Minister. What a harmonious Administration!

On 10 December 2012, some six years ago, we submitted a formal letter to the Council (S/2012/917), before the operators of terrorist groups claimed, for the first time, that sarin gas was used in Khan Al-Assal on 19 March 2013. We informed the Council that the United States, the United Kingdom and France had launched a campaign of allegations claiming that the Syrian Government may have used chemical weapons. Back then, we warned that such allegations would encourage Governments that sponsor terrorists to provide chemical weapons to armed terrorist groups and then claim that the Syrian Government had used such weapons. What happened in the past few years

in Khan Al-Assal, Ghouta, Kafr Zita, Lataminah, Tal Minis, Khan Shaykhun and many other villages and towns in Syria confirms unequivocally what we had warned of five to six years ago, and during all these six years.

The United States, the United Kingdom and France have been extremely eager to hold one meeting after another based on fabricated information. That is part of the deep crisis that we are witnessing. They want to involve other Council members in that crisis. Since 2013, those three countries have created a big elephant of lies and deceit in the Security Council. That elephant is living in the Chamber today and is stomping on the credibility of the Council with its huge feet. It seems that these countries called for the holding of today's meeting to support terrorists and to obstruct the agreement reached about Douma.

However, those countries were a bit late because the terrorists had hoped this meeting would be held before they were forced to reach an agreement with the Syrian State to leave their strongholds and hand over their weapons. These countries were late in fulfilling their promises to the terrorists. It would have been better not to repeat their nasty story and not to rely on false reports from mercenaries — so-called White Helmets, founded by British intelligence officer James Le Mesurier. He is British, but his name is French. What proves that these countries were lying is that the residents of Douma left the city safely — 170,000 civilians left the city safely. Those terrorists chose to reach an agreement with the Syrian State as a last resort for them and their families. Many buses are transferring them and their families to the city of Jarabulus, after they refused to settle their affairs and chose to go there. However, the vast majority of residents chose to stay in their houses and resort to the Syrian State.

It has been proven that the allegations of certain States, including some States members of the Council, on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in eastern Ghouta were lies, just as we saw in Aleppo and other places. As it turned out, terrorist group warehouses were full of medication and food, monopolized by their elements who sold some of those items to civilians at exorbitant prices. At this point, I must ask: Did the three countries call for this meeting in order to legitimize the Israeli aggression that occurred this morning or to impede the implementation of the agreement reached with their terrorist tools?

In this context, I must thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for recognizing the true nature of what these countries were preparing for, and aptly called for the meeting to be held under the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security". That is the correct agenda item.

We have conveyed to the Security Council, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and what used to be called the Joint Investigative Mechanism 145 letters, the latest on 1 April 2018. I thank the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan for pointing out that the Council members do not read and that the Council does not respond to those letters. The letters contain accurate information. They indicate that armed terrorist groups possess toxic chemical substances, notably chlorine and sarin. We have warned time and again that those groups were preparing to commit crimes involving chemical weapons against innocent Syrians, and were working with the White Helmets to fabricate evidence, photograph locations and film Hollywood-like scenes with everything staged in order to blame the Syrian Government and influence public opinion against Syria and its allies. Those countries call for the holding of meetings such as this in order to create a pretext that would justify any military aggression against Syria.

It seems that the directors of that terrorist scene failed to perfect their web of lies. We note that in each of those theatrical scenes on the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government, the substances never seem to affect the armed elements, but only women and children. These chemical weapons seem to discriminate against women and children and do not affect armed men. It suffices to wash away these chemicals with water in front of the camera. Water appears to heal everything. Rescue workers never [illegible] to wear protective masks. The Syrian Arab Army does not use these substances because it does not possess them to begin with. The Americans destroyed them on the vessel *MV Cape Ray* in the Mediterranean. So, the Syrian Arab Army uses these substances, which it does not possess, only when it is making military progress. How strange that is!

This vehement campaign lacks the minimum standards of credibility. It relies on fabricated information on social media by elements of armed terrorist groups and their operators. I announce from this table that the Syrian Government is fully prepared to facilitate an OPCW fact-finding mission to Douma,

where the incident is alleged to have occurred, as soon as possible to investigate and verify these allegations. We endorse the Russian proposal to hear a briefing on the fact-finding mission's report after its visit to Al-Raqqa. We welcome this visit as soon as possible.

I hope that this offer does not suffer the same fate as the first offer we made to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon after the Khan Al-Assal incident of chemical substance use in March 2013. At that time, we asked the Secretary-General to provide assistance to the Syrian Government in immediately investigating what happened in the town of Khan Al-Assal. It took the United Nations four months and 11 days to send Mr. Sellström, as Council members recall. Yes, it took the United Nations four months and 11 days. That is how the United Nations interpreted the term "immediately" — four months and 11 days. When Mr. Sellström arrived in Damascus to investigate what had happened in Khan Al-Assal, terrorists in Ghouta were instructed to use chemical substances again. Mr. Sellström therefore left Khan Al-Assal and moved to Ghouta. Council members should be aware that since March 2013, investigations into what happened in Khan Al-Assal have not taken place.

Today, we directly accuse Washington, D.C., Paris, London, Riyadh, Doha and Ankara of providing Da'esh, Al-Nusra Front, Jaysh Al-Islam, Faylaq Al-Rahman and scores of other affiliated terrorist groups with toxic chemical substances to be used against Syrian civilians. We accuse them of inciting those massacres and of fabricating evidence to falsely blame the Syrian Government for the use of toxic chemical substances in order to prepare the ground for an aggression against my country, just as the United States and the United Kingdom did in Iraq in 2003.

Yes, we say to the United States, the United Kingdom and France that, in Syria and Iraq, we eliminated the vast majority of Da'esh elements within three years — not within 30 years, as President Obama has said. Those States have plans to justify undermining the stability of the region. Yes, we say to Saudi Arabia today that we cut off its terrorist tentacles — the gangs of Jaysh Al-Islam — in eastern Ghouta. Yes, we say to Qatar and Turkey that we cut off their terrorist tentacles — the gangs of the Al-Nusra Front and Faylaq al-Rahman — in eastern Ghouta. I say to all those who sent moderate, armed, genetically modified opposition fighters to our land that we eliminated these toxic exports. We call on those exporters to bear the consequences of their actions, as some surviving elements will return to their original countries.

The issue is very simple. Let me just say that on our borders with Turkey and in the separation zone in the Golan with Israel, there are tens of thousands of good, moderate terrorists with their light weapons, long beards, black banners and white helmets. Whoever wants to adopt them should submit an application to their operators. They are ready to go to Europe and the West as refugees.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic stresses once again that it does not possess chemical weapons of any type, including chlorine. We condemn anew the use of chemical weapons at anytime, anywhere and in any circumstances. My country, Syria, reaffirms its readiness to cooperate fully with the OPCW in fulfilling its commitments under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

The Russian Centre for Reconciliation in Syria announced today that Russian military experts have carried out investigations in Douma and confirmed that they have found no sign of the use of chemical weapons there. While treating the sick in the hospitals of Douma, Russian doctors have proven that these patients have not been subjected to any chemical substance. What we were seeing there was nothing but Hollywood-style scenes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8226

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8226th meeting
Tuesday, 10 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Bieke
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (S/2018/241)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-10068 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (S/2018/241)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Haiti to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/286, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/241, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:
Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:
None

Abstaining:
China, Russian Federation

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2410 (2018).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): Today's resolution 2410 (2018), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) for another year, is about Haiti. It is about the continuing progress the country has made towards security and stability. It is about adapting the United Nations peacekeeping mission there to the political and security situation on the ground. It is about helping Haiti to develop the capacity to take the lead in providing its own security and strengthening its own institutions.

While some members of the Council may have tried to sow confusion about what is standard peacekeeping language in a Security Council mandate, the fact remains that we are here today in support of Haiti and of MINUJUSTH. Time and again, the Council has expressed its support for equipping peacekeeping missions with what is needed to protect civilians around the world, and today is no different. With this resolution, the Council reaffirms its support for the Government of Haiti, for MINUJUSTH and for their close cooperation with the United Nations country team and all of the United Nations agencies working to build a stronger Haiti. This will be key as MINUJUSTH to transition to a non-peacekeeping presence in October of 2019.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin my statement in explanation of vote with words of support for Haiti and our hopes that we will see it sustainably stabilized as soon as possible. I am not going to repeat what I said a week ago on the subject (see S/PV.8220), but will recall only that almost all the speakers on 3 April noted the encouraging developments in the situation in Haiti and mentioned the possibility of the peacekeeping mission's gradual withdrawal and transfer of authority to the Government of Haiti. The latest report (S/2018/241) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) contained similar sentiments that were affirmed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, after his visit to Haiti.

Nevertheless, during the work on the draft of resolution 2410 (2018) extending the mandate of the Mission, we were surprised to find that the authors had decided to toughen a key provision of the document that had remained unchanged since the peacekeeping presence in Haiti began in 2004, which is the reference

to the procedure for the application of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides for the use of sanctions and military force. For the past 14 years, the peacekeeping presence in the country operated under Chapter VII year after year, but its application was carefully limited to the specific tasks of ensuring the physical security of the civilian population and the peacekeepers themselves. It has been done that way in other cases as well, for example in resolution 2386 (2017), on Abyei, which, by the way, was also initiated by our American colleagues. The new Mission in Haiti is focused on helping the Government to strengthen its own capacity and to monitor human rights.

This year, despite all the discussions about the speedy transfer of the Mission's functions to the host Government, several Council members decided to up the pressure and did so in an inexplicable hurry, presenting the draft in blue more than a week before the expiry of the Mission's mandate. Why did the authors not use that time to hold a thorough discussion and find an acceptable consensus? I would like to ask those who supported this approach what has changed in the human rights situation, in a country where for a long time there has been no armed conflict, so that it has suddenly become a threat to international peace and security. Or is this another attempt to use the Security Council to put pressure on a sovereign State? It looks very like yet another effort to speculate on the subject of human rights in one of the world's most important international forums, established exclusively to discuss the most dangerous threats to international peace. There can be no question that the situation in Haiti bears no relation to that.

I would like to remind the Council that a week ago, most of those States advocated strengthening Haitians' sense of national responsibility and the importance of the Mission's cooperation with the Government. But in fact the resolution ignores the position of Port-au-Prince on this crucial issue, which is well known, since the Security Council visited Haiti very recently. We also cannot help noticing the increasingly critical attitude to the United Nations Mission on the part of the people of Haiti. That is an extremely worrying fact that should be attended to as a matter of priority. We believe that such approaches will not contribute to the effectiveness of the Mission's work. We are already seeing corresponding signs that are cause for concern. It is good that Under-Secretary-General Lacroix knows about the misunderstandings between the Head of the Mission and the host country, as he alluded to in his statement.

There is one other worrying issue. A number of delegations that regularly and publicly express their full support for the United Nations zero-tolerance policy for sexual crimes have refused to help to implement it. The result is that the resolution overlooks crimes in which representatives of non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations are involved, despite the fact that Haitian society has desperately urged the international community to focus on the problem. We have heard no intelligible explanations for such double standards. In this regard, we appeal to the Mission leadership and the Secretariat to inform the Council of known flagrant cases, for which the necessary tools exist.

Since we believe that international support is critical to Haiti at this very important stage, we did not decide to block the resolution in its current form. The Mission will continue, in strict accordance with its mandate, to provide assistance to the host country in upholding the rule of law and strengthening the capacity of its law-enforcement bodies. However, for the reasons I have stated, we cannot support the resolution as it is written. We insist that invoking Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, if it is even applicable to the situation in Haiti, should be contemplated only as a last resort for issues of physical safety.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that we are unfortunately witnesses to the fact that in their attempts to put pressure on everyone involved for no reason, some well-known Council members have once again ruined another consensus vote, despite the fact that there are already too few topics on which the Council has a united position. This time, colleagues decided to toughen their position on a country where the situation is evolving more or less positively, the United Nations Mission is functioning and there are hopes that it can be gradually drawn down. There is no way we can agree with that approach. As a result, the significance of today's decision is seriously undermined. Was it worth it? It might have been better to agree on a consensus-based resolution rather than moving it up by a week. But regardless of that, we want to express our support to Port-au-Prince and affirm that Russia will continue to work to ensure that the results of the Security Council's efforts will help to truly normalize the situation in Haiti and strengthen its sovereignty and self-sufficiency.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia, as a country committed to its region but above all in the interest of responsibility and transparency, would like to explain its vote today. We voted in favour of resolution 2410 (2018), but would like to highlight specific elements that were not considered by the United States delegation, as penholder, with regard to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Support of Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). Those elements have already been expressed by some delegations, including my own.

That is why, the resolution today to renew the mandate of MINUJUSTH has not been adopted unanimously, which is cause for concern given that it does not send the right message to the Republic of Haiti, to the Mission and to the international community, in general. MINUJUSTH requires the full support of the Council in order to fulfil its mandate, and Haiti requires the effective support in order to tackle its impending challenges.

Moreover, it is worrying that penholder States are overstepping their boundaries without considering the positions and opinions of other members of the Security Council, not to mention those of the host country. The resolution provides that the Security Council shall act in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations for the entire mandate of MINUJUSTH. The main argument for that is that in last year's resolution 2350 (2017), the Security Council was already acting in line with Chapter VII. The fifteenth preambular paragraph of that resolution states:

> "Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as described in section 1 of operative paragraph 7 of resolution 1542 (2004), and with regards to operative paragraphs 5 to 14 that relate to the new mission,"

The human rights component is included in paragraph 6. Nevertheless, the term "relate to" implies that the Security Council acts under Chapter VII only with regard to section 1 of operative paragraph 7 of resolution 1542 (2004), included between operative paragraphs 5 and 14, whereas section 1 of operative paragraph 7 of resolution 1542 (2004) was only in reference to a secure and stable environment, that is, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations with regard to section 1. It subsequently states that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti will enjoy the following mandate in a secure and stable environment.

We have been told that the resolution is about Haiti. During the June 2017 Security Council visit to Haiti, the President of Haiti, members of the Haitian Parliament and various representatives of civil society expressly requested that the mandate be governed by Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations because, in their view, Haiti is certainly not a threat to regional or international peace and security.

We are confident that, in order to build trust between the United Nations and Haiti, at the very least the language used in previous resolutions of the past 14 years should have been used. Finally, we are convinced that the current language used in the adopted resolution must not set a precedent for future missions. Obviously, it is concerning that the reality on the ground is not taken into account and that resolutions are put to a vote with the knowledge that there is no consensus.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At present, the United Nations Mission in Support of Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) should focus on helping the Haitian Government to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining national security and ultimately achieve an orderly drawdown, in line with the national interests of Haiti and countries in the region.

China believes that the Security Council has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Currently, the overall situation in Haiti is stable. The mandate of MINUJUSTH should be clear and explicit, with a focus on helping Haiti to address peace and security challenges, rather than focusing too much on human rights in Haiti. The members of the Council should have carried out patient consultations on the draft resolution. When some members of the Council had concerns about the draft text, the relevant parties should not have railroaded a vote. The resolution just adopted on does not fully take into account the legitimate concerns of some members.

China regrets that and therefore voted in abstention. China hopes that the members of the Council will continue to remain united, make sure that the MINUJUSTH implements the two-year drawdown strategy smoothly and strive to promote stability and development in Haiti.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018),

renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Support of Justice in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) for one year and setting the stage for its withdrawal with a view to a transition in October 2019. Until then, MINUJUSTH will pursue its mandate, based on three pillars: strengthening the Haitian National Police, consolidating the rule of law and monitoring the human rights situation. We regret that the Mission did not receive the Council's unanimous consent, despite the fact that we all support the objective of a stable and prosperous Haiti.

MINUJUSTH's tasks regarding the professionalization of justice and the training of police represent the foundations of long-term stability and the necessary conditions for the economic development of Haiti. We encourage the Haitian authorities to take advantage of this United Nations tool in order to consolidate the country's stability and improve the people's well-being. The prospect of meeting an exit strategy by October 2019 should not paralyse us or affect the remarkable work of men and women currently on the ground. The benchmarks identified by the Secretary-General, including those on the protection of the rights of Haitian citizens, are a compass for guiding the work of MINUJUSTH and the Haitian authorities. It is now incumbent upon the Haitian State to take ownership of those objectives in order to ensure the enduring success of its cooperation with the United Nations. Haiti can count upon the full support of France in that endeavour.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018) today and the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) for a further 12 months. As the United States has made clear, today's vote is not a reflection of MINUJUSTH or the Government of Haiti. As we set out on Tuesday (see S/PV.8220), we are committed to the development of Haiti and an integrated United Nations country presence. Progress against the exit strategy over the final 18 months of the Mission will enable a smooth transfer of tasks from MINUJUSTH to the United Nations country team and the Government of Haiti.

We believe strongly that MINUJUSTH must have the tools it needs to make that transition a success, and that includes continued authorization under Chapter VII to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate. In addition, progress must be measured against the Secretary-General's benchmarks and anchored in Haiti's long-term development, security and political priorities.

MINUJUSTH cannot deliver that alone. Haitian ownership and delivery of important reforms are critical to a positive future for the people of Haiti. We therefore repeat our call on the Government of Haiti, MINUJUSTH and the United Nations country team to work closely together to ensure that the solid foundations exist for long-term political stability.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We welcome the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018) renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). It is unfortunate that the resolution could not be adopted by consensus, no doubt for good reason. We had hoped that some of the concerns expressed on the draft text, including the issues with regard to invoking Chapter VII, could have been addressed. We believe that has implications for future discussions, and that is why we conveyed our concerns to the penholder, together with other like-minded countries.

Of course, it would have been much better if we had been able to send a strong and unified message in support of Haiti. Nonetheless, we all agree that the establishment of the Mission was indeed very important to consolidating peace by strengthening the institutions of justice and the rule of law, as well as supporting the institutional and operational capacity of the Haitian National Police. The renewal of its mandate will enable it to continue assisting the Government in strengthening rule of law institutions. We appreciate the initiatives and efforts being undertaken by the Mission to build the capacities of the Haitian Police in strategic and operational planning, criminal intelligence, investigations, organized crime, crime scene management, recruitment, training, gender mainstreaming, crowd control, information technology, communications, logistics and infrastructure maintenance. However, we note the challenges being faced in the area of justice and correction and the efforts being made by MINUJUSTH to address them, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/241).

We understand that Haiti still continues to face enormous challenges and vulnerabilities. We hope the new partnership established between Haiti and the United Nations with the establishment of MINUJUSTH will lay a solid foundation for the long-term stability and sustainable development of Haiti.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses its satisfaction with the renewal of the mandate for the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) in order to ensure the strengthening of its State institutions over the next 12 months of the mandate. It will provide support to Haiti's administrative, legal and legislative institutions, strengthen the rule of law; and help to fight crime and promote good governance.

However, we express our concern with regard to several of the Chapter VII provisions that have been included in resolution 2410 (2018). We would have preferred that priority had been given to the spirit of trust between the support Mission and the Government of Haiti and also that any disagreements could have been solved through dialogue. In that light, we would have preferred that those provisions would have been included under Chapter VI. However, given the urgent need to renew the Mission's mandate, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea voted in favour.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) Haiti has in recent years embarked upon a remarkable journey of positive change. The country has made great strides towards a stable political and security situation. That is of direct importance to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as three constituent countries of our Kingdom — Saint Martin, Aruba and Curaçao — are in the Caribbean and we have many Haitian citizens living in these countries.

In our view, Haiti should now seize this opportunity to further build and strengthen its public institutions to ensure the rule of law and respect for human rights. The United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) was set up to support the Haitian Government and people with this ambition. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018), which extends the existing mandate of MINUJUSTH and enables the Mission to continue its important work in integrated way. We therefore regret that the resolution could ultimately not count on the unanimous support of the Council. We express the hope that Haiti, in close partnership with the Mission, and involving women at all levels, can and will build a solid foundation for longer-term political stability, security and inclusive development.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland welcomes the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018) extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). However, it is unfortunate that we were not able to maintain the good practice of having an anonymous adoption of a resolution that technically rolls over the mandate. Poland voted in favour of the resolution, hoping for the unity of the Council.

Another division of the Council sends a negative message to a place that needs positive signals now, as it is right in the middle of the process of transition. It is time not to point fingers, but rather to find a way to avoid such a situation in the future for the sake of the Council's credibility and efficiency.

Let me conclude with expressing once again our satisfaction with the progress made by the Haitian Government and its people in building a better future for their country. We believe that further presence of MINUJUSTH will support those efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now take the floor in my national capacity.

Peru welcomes the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) for an additional year and laying the foundation for the transition towards a normalization of the United Nations presence in the post-peacekeeping period. In that regard, we place our trust in the important work being carried out by the Mission in support of the Haitian Government in strengthening the rule of law, professionalizing the police force and monitoring the human rights situation.

We also believe that efforts in those areas should be aimed at achieving the objectives identified by the Secretary-General, which establish a road map for stability, security and prosperity in Haiti. Despite the lack of unanimity on resolution 2410 (2018), which we have just adopted, we feel it is important to uphold the commitment that we know exists among all members of the Council with regard to the need to continue to support Haiti. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the responsibility of the Council is larger than the mandate established for this Mission. We must contribute to building a dynamic relationship of mutual trust between the Government of Haiti and the United Nations in general.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having granted me an opportunity to voice the views of my delegation following the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018), concerning the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). The document appears to align with the approach set out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/241), dated 20 March 2018, and with his largely positive appraisal of the situation in Haiti in recent months.

My delegation notes that the first key element of the text is the one-year renewal of the mandate of MINUJUSTH until 15 April 2019. The second element is the gradual drawdown, over several stages, of the presence of the United Nations police, beginning 15 October 2018 and ending in April 2019. The third element is a referral to the exit strategy, which is to be spread out over a two-year period, based on an assessment report to be submitted to the Council by the Secretary-General. The fourth element is the conduct of a strategic assessment mission in February 2019 to set the stage for the withdrawal of the Mission in the light of the benchmarks that have been jointly set out. The fifth element is the design of a transition plan, including a United Nations presence in Haiti to be comprised of country teams, various funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations, working in close cooperation with the Haitian Government.

My delegation deplores, however, the fact that the recommendations delivered through Member States of the Council were not taken into account, all the more so given that the addressee of the resolution is the Haitian Government. We see an example of that in the tenth preambular paragraph, in the first operational provision of the text and, more broadly speaking, in the reference to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, despite the unanimous view that MINUJUSTH is a mission of support and technical assistance for the national institutions responsible for upholding the rule of law in Haiti.

The Haitian Government has had extensive experience in cooperating with the United Nations in general, and with the Security Council in particular. Over the course of the months to come, and in the operations and initiatives of MINUJUSTH in Haiti, my delegation hopes to see the development of harmonious relations with the Mission at all levels. To echo the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, it is important to maintain a healthy relationship with the public authorities and the population, based on solidarity and mutual trust. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 2410 (2018). However, it expresses reservations vis-à-vis the preamble and the provisions that, although they did not receive the necessary consensus, have been included in the text. We are particularly concerned about the reference to Chapter VII of the Charter.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8227

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8227th meeting
Tuesday, 10 April 2018, 10.50 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (S/2018/209)

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18-10074 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50am.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (S/2018/209)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/209, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit: Since my most recent briefing to the Council, a year ago (see S/PV.7923), my Office has continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, in close collaboration with the African Union and the other guarantors of the Framework agreement, namely, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). During the period under review, I and my Office focused our engagement on a number of critical areas.

The first issue is that of negative forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The negative forces, including the Allied Democratic Forces, continue to attack and terrify the population, causing suffering and displacement and fuelling mistrust between the countries of the region. The Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) remain active and exert control over their disarmed former members and dependants in transit camps, whose continued presence further exacerbates tensions with the host population. The issue of the ex-Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) members WHO are still in Rwanda and Uganda is yet to be fully resolved.

Based on the outcome of the visit of representatives of signatory countries and the guarantors to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in September 2017, which my Office promoted, the leaders of the region, at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held on 19 October 2017 in Brazzaville, adopted the following decisions, among others.

They called for the strengthening of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Intervention Brigade and for the repatriation, without conditions and no later than 20 October 2018, of disarmed FDLR combatants and dependants still in camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of ex-M-23 members WHO remain in Rwanda and Uganda.

As a next step, the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants and their dependants is expected to be launched in Goma at the end of this month.

Secondly, I turn to support for peaceful dialogue and electoral processes. Our focus has remained on the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, two core countries of the Framework agreement.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the progress made in preparations for the elections, tensions persist between the Government and the opposition over conditions for the holding of the elections. My efforts during the period under review focused on mobilizing concerted regional and international support for the implementation of the 31 December agreement and the holding of peaceful and credible elections. In this regard, we have been promoting initiatives by the Framework agreement guarantors and engaged key Congolese stakeholders.

With the same aim, I maintained close contacts with regional leaders, particularly President Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo and President Lourenço of Angola, in view of their role and engagement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as

the African Union and other partners. Most recently, I facilitated a consultation in Addis Ababa between the African Union Commission Chairperson and representatives of the guarantors and Special Envoys for the Great Lakes region.

Regarding Burundi, the political and human rights situation remains of great concern, particularly as the country is heading towards a referendum for constitutional changes. In consultation with Special Envoy Kafando, I seized every opportunity to encourage regional leaders to remain focused on the crisis and to support the efforts of the East African Community facilitation to ensure progress in the inter-Burundi dialogue and to maintain the legacy of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

The third critical area is addressing the root causes of conflicts in the region. In this regard, the continued illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources from the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributes, as we know, to financing negative forces and deprives the country of critical sources of growth and development. As recommended by the meeting on natural resources that we convened jointly with the ICGLR in July 2017, my office will continue to encourage greater political commitment by the core countries of the region to curb the illicit trafficking of resources from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Human rights violations and impunity remain central to the instability in the region. Recent cases of the extradition of leaders of armed groups are encouraging, but more concerted efforts are necessary to advance judicial cooperation. Together with the ICGLR, we are working to operationalize the judicial cooperation network that we jointly established in 2016.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region is of great concern to all and requires greater attention. My Office, together with the ICGLR and with the support of the United Nations regional team, especially the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is preparing to convene stakeholders' consultations on forced displacement to raise awareness of the magnitude of the problem and reinvigorate the commitment to finding lasting solutions to conflict and displacement in the region.

Furthermore, within the United Nations regional team, we have continued to implement the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework as a cross-border approach to assist in addressing the root causes of conflict. We have also been supporting women, youth and civil society to enable them to play a key role in promoting the objectives of the Framework agreement. For instance, we are now preparing, together with ICGLR and the African Union women mediators, known as #FemWise, joint high-level missions to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan to promote the role of women in peace and political processes.

Lastly, we have continued to mobilize the leadership of the region through the governing mechanisms of the Framework agreement to promote dialogue and cooperation among signatory countries. The Regional Oversight Mechanism and its Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework are indeed critical vehicles to ensure sustained political engagement with regard to the regional commitments under the Framework agreement and to address contentious issues. I am encouraged by indications of greater ownership, as exemplified by the commitment of Uganda — succeeding Angola and the Republic of the Congo — to assume the chairmanship of the Regional Oversight Mechanism later this year.

This past February marked the fifth anniversary of the Framework agreement. On that occasion, we organized consultations on 26 and 27 February in Addis Ababa to assess its implementation. That initiative came in the wake of the adoption of resolution 2389 (2017), which requested the Secretary-General to engage in high-level dialogue to assess progress and challenges in the implementation of the Framework agreement and to present his vision on the way forward. It came to light that, although progress is slow and the Framework agreement has yet to fully deliver on the expectations it raised, it remains a vital tool for promoting cooperation, peace and security in the region, in complementarity with the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

Progress was noted in some areas, such as the defeat of the M-23 rebel movement, the weakening of the FDLR and the establishment of confidence-building mechanisms, as well as increasing economic cooperation and integration. However, participants highlighted that greater political will is needed to fully implement the commitments under the Framework agreement. It was noted that mistrust among core countries in the region also continues to undermine progress.

(*spoke in French*)

The discussions in Addis Ababa brought to light the fact that the signatory countries must, with the support of the international community, strengthen their efforts to bring about lasting peace to the region. In that regard, I underscore the important role that regional organizations are playing in finding a lasting solution to instability in the region. I therefore recall the following priorities that should guide our collective action.

First, increased resolute efforts must be made to dispel mistrust among the countries in the heart of the Great Lakes: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. In that regard, I welcome the sustained commitment of the leaders of the region and the African Union. At the recent meeting I had on 29 March with President Sassou Nguesso, in his dual capacity as Chair of the ICGLR and Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, we discussed possibilities for strengthening relations among those countries through the good offices of the leaders of the region.

Secondly, in the months to come we must continue to focus our attention on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo both in terms of security in the eastern part of the country and in terms of the electoral process. Although measures are being considered to enhance the effectiveness of the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade, the financing of armed groups must also be addressed by effectively combating the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources. Moreover, all parties concerned must fully commit to the repatriation of unarmed foreign combatants. In addition, in order to ensure the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and to create the conditions for an inclusive and credible electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is essential that the Security Council remain united in its support for the ongoing work under way in the region.

Thirdly, we must not lose sight of the situation in Burundi. Greater commitment on the part of the leaders of the region and the African Union, with the support of the United Nations, is needed to reinvigorate dialogue among all stakeholders in Burundi, led by the East African Community and its Facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa.

Fourthly, the countries of the region and humanitarian actors must come together to come up with sustainable and regional solutions to the worrying humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes. I hope that the consultations that we intend to facilitate with the ICGLR and stakeholders will help in that regard.

Lastly, it seems to me that at some point the United Nations, in cooperation with leaders of the region, must address the problem of overlapping mandates and goals of the Framework agreement and the ICGLR Pact, while considering the comparative advantages of both instruments and the need to ensure complementarity and synergy between those two mechanisms.

The Great Lakes region remains one of the most volatile and complex regions of the continent, even though it could significantly contribute to Africa's stability and development. I encourage the Security Council to continue to urge all stakeholders to work towards the common goal of bringing lasting peace, stability and development to the region and its people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Djinnit for his very informative briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Balé (Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Today's Security Council meeting is taking place within the historical context of the five-year anniversary of the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, in keeping with the spirit of paragraph 24 of resolution 2389 (2017). I therefore thank you, Sir, for associating this commemorative meeting with the dual chairmanship of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), which was entrusted to President Denis Sassou Nguesso. Accordingly, we have been afforded the opportunity to share the region's vision with Council members.

I am grateful to Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Said Djinnit, whose detailed briefing throws light on the tragedy unfolding before our eyes, but hope for a prosperous future remains possible through the regional cooperation mechanism that is the Framework agreement. Five years following the signing of the historic Addis Ababa agreement on 24 February 2013, the time has undoubtedly come to assess the level of commitment of each of the signatories to that instrument, which foreshadowed much hope, especially

as symbolized by the end of the Mouvement du 23 mars rebellion.

Today's meeting is part of the momentum of the work of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in particular that of its seventh ordinary summit of Heads of State and Government and eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework that were held in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, on 19 October 2017. The ICGLR summit considered the political and security situation in the region within the broader theme, entitled "Fast-tracking implementation of the Pact to facilitate stability and development in the Great Lakes Region". Among other things, I would mention the summit's adoption of the recommendations of the Self-financing Mechanism of the Regional Initiative to Fight against Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, which is an essential tool for successfully combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Great Lakes region. The aim is to eradicate that scourge and ultimately achieve sustainable natural-resource management, which is one of the six pillars of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

The conclusions of the Regional Oversight Mechanism meeting could be summarized as follows: neutralization of negative forces; repatriation of disarmed combatants; and engagement of political dialogue and processes in the region. The Special Envoy laid out for us the remedies we intend to implement to tackle those scourges. The Special Envoy, WHO works closely with the countries of the subregion and whose regular consultations are appreciated by the Chair-in-Office, has delineated all of the issues in a comprehensive manner. I would ask the Council to allow me to limit my remarks to a synopsis of the activities of the combined presidency of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the ICGLR.

Since the holding of the seventh ICGLR summit and the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region on 19 October 2017, in Brazzaville, the Chair-in-Office of the two bodies has been constantly monitoring the political and security situation in the countries of the region. The particular attention paid to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is undoubtedly commensurate with the country's strategic position in the Great Lakes region.

Five months after the seventh summit of Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, efforts have been made to stabilize the subregion. Developments in the region, and particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have led the ICGLR to hold two tripartite meetings: in Brazzaville on 9 December 2017 and in Kinshasa on 14 February 2018. Those summit meetings were held under the auspices of the current Chair-in-Office of the ICGLR and the Regional Oversight Mechanism, President Sassou Nguesso, together with the leaders of the Republic of Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço and President Joseph Kabila Kabange, respectively. They also met in Luanda for a third tripartite summit.

These tripartite consultations made it possible to consider the political and security situation in the subregion, and in particular the evolution of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The worrisome security situation in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was also at the centre of their exchanges, which ended with a firm condemnation of the activism of the armed groups. The consultations, sometimes extended to include civil-society participants or other stakeholders, enabled the Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism to hold talks on 9 January in Brazzaville with the President of the Conférence épiscopale nationals du Congo, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, at the head of a delegation of Catholic bishops, following the repression of the Catholic demonstrations that had taken place on 31 December 2017 in Kinshasa.

On 10 January 2018, the Chair of the ICGLR, drawing on the conclusions of the most recent summit on the stabilization and development of the region, drew the attention of Secretary-General António Guterres and of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, to the need for a decision on the neutralization of negative forces following the recommendation on the strengthening of the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a view to adapting it to the new challenges linked to the fight against the negative forces operating in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in order to maintain military pressure and intensify operations against the armed groups, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces,

the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda and the Kamuina Nsapu, which continue to destabilize the country.

Furthermore, during the period under review, it must be acknowledged that the first electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo made notable progress. Since the publication of the electoral calendar on 5 November 2017, the alignment of the country around the holding of elections on 23 December 2018 has been strongly established.

But those advances must not obscure the many challenges that could compromise the success of the process. Thy include respect for the road map by the political class as a whole, the financing of the elections and the logistics essential to their realization, the difficulties in mitigating the demands of the opposition now taken up by the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, and the strengthening of the country's security in relation to the activism of armed groups.

We are entering the critical phase of the process. We therefore urge the political class and civil society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to properly assess what is at stake by showing greater responsibility and the ability to go beyond themselves by privileging the general interest, in order to guarantee a peaceful electoral process. In this undertaking, the international community has a part to play in providing support and assistance that could prove decisive. Consequently, with foresight and respect for the sovereignty and independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the parties to the Framework Agreement and the guarantors must honour their commitments, particularly in the regional and international mobilization efforts in favour of peace and stability in the country and, at the same time, work towards the implementation of the electoral road map.

In Kenya, while the commitment made on 9 March 2018 by President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga to reconcile the country is to be welcomed, the reconciliation process must nevertheless be sustained with the support of the main actors.

With respect to the follow-up of the implementation of the road map of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the Chair of the ICGLR and Regional Oversight Mechanism and his colleagues have deplored the persistence of violence in the Central African Republic and reiterated their call to the international community to increase its support for the process of stabilization and national reconciliation. The armed groups are called on to cease all hostilities and participate in the peace process under the aegis of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

The Chair of the ICGLR and the Regional Oversight Mechanism is following with great attention the dialogue process being led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). He supported the efforts of the High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan and South Sudan, and all African Union mechanisms supporting the progress achieved by IGAD in the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan of August 2015.

In Burundi, oversight of the process has allowed us to take note that a constitutional referendum is scheduled for May 2018. However, the process of dialogue led by the East African Community, currently in a jam, will have to be relaunched under the impetus of the mediator, President Museveni, and the facilitator, former President Mkapa. The involvement of the African Union, which has maintained dialogue with regional leaders on ways and means to promote the East African Community's efforts, is being followed with great interest. It is worth noting that the release of 740 prisoners, a majority of whom were sentenced for participation in the insurrectional movement of 2015, is a reason for appeasement in the sociopolitical crisis in the country. With regard to relations between Rwanda and Burundi, the Chair of the ICGLR and the Regional Oversight Mechanism is continuing his efforts to alleviate tensions and improve relations between the two countries.

The problems of peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region, which have been the setting for conflict for decades, are undoubtedly linked to those of development, one conditioning the other. Starting now, we should be thinking beyond electoral deadlines, which cannot be an end in themselves. Making lasting peace and stability in the region, which is the aspiration of its peoples, also requires means other than electoral consultations. As we have said, and we can only agree with the obvious: the Democratic Republic of the Congo is undoubtedly the nerve centre of the Great Lakes region, and it is not in vain that it constitutes the cornerstone of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It is our duty to help it to regain lasting stability so that it can play the role to which its immense potential predisposes it and

so that it can be deployed as a catalyst for integration, a vector of peace and stability.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, with its Regional Oversight Mechanism, remains an essential mechanism for achieving lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region. That is why the international community as a whole must mobilize around the efforts of the countries of the region in the context of strengthened and coordinated cooperation. The implementation of the Framework agreement requires greater political commitment on the part of the signatories to give it substance and life.

In conclusion, I would like to assure Council members of the continued commitment of President Sassou Nguesso, in his triple capacity as current Chair-in-Office of the ICGLR, Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and President of the Republic of the Congo, a country party to the Framework agreement. He will support any initiative that helps to coordinate our actions and to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to serve the noble cause of peace, in particular in the Great Lakes region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Balé for his very informative briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council WHO wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking Mr., Djinnit, not only for his very informative briefing but also for his outstanding work and unwavering commitment to peace in the Great Lakes region. I also wish to thank Ambassador Balé, Permanent Representative of the Congo, in his dual capacity as the representative of the chairmanship of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement and the chairmanship of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Five years after the signing of the Framework agreement, it was important for the Security Council to take stock of its implementation and to consider ways to move forward with its implementation. The regional dimension of the Great Lakes crisis must not be overlooked.

As a close partner of the countries of the region and a permanent member of the Security Council, our most cherished wish is to see them build on the trajectory towards lasting peace and stability, which will finally allow them to benefit from the wealth of their natural resources in order to ensure the well-being of their people and to focus on their development.

That trajectory involves strengthening political stability, the democratic legitimacy of institutions and the fight against impunity. In that context, the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of particular importance. The elections scheduled for 23 December should allow, for the first time, a peaceful transition of power. Without credible elections that are accepted by all, the stability of the country and of the entire region is at stake. To achieve that, it is essential to ensure respect for the electoral calendar and trust in the process of organizing the elections through their openness and transparency. There must also be a peaceful environment, in which all candidates can declare themselves and campaign freely without fear of reprisals.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is crucial to holding free, credible, transparent and peaceful elections. In that context, we welcome the commitment of countries in the region to follow-up and support for the Congolese people on the path towards the open, free and peaceful organization of the elections.

That trajectory also requires better regional integration to ensure good cooperation among the States of the region. By establishing such interdependence, thanks to the comparative advantages of each for the benefit of all, the region will experience real economic change and development. It is a priority objective of the African Union and France, which has adapted its support policies and mechanisms to make its action part of a regional perspective.

The French institute of Goma, the Hall of Volcanoes, which was inaugurated six months ago and brings together French-speaking countries, multilingualism, training and new technologies, therefore seeks to be accessible to the young people of the entire region. That tool is aimed at not only the young people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also, beyond its near borders, those of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, to create projects and common aspirations for an effective regional partnership.

To achieve that, the full and complete implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework agreement is essential. France welcomes the renewed commitment of the countries of the region to that end. The meeting of the Follow-up Mechanism on 19 October set ambitious goals, in particular for the repatriation of disarmed combatants. France encourages the countries of the region to do their utmost to ensure that those objectives are fully implemented.

Such commitment is all the more essential given that negative forces continue to operate in the region. A lasting resolution of that problem requires decisive action in three areas, and regional organizations, the ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have a key role to play.

First, with regard to military engagement against armed groups, a key role will be played by the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), provided by SADC. The renewed mandate of MONUSCO should enable it to rebuild its capacity for mobility in order for it to engage in decisive offensive actions, as it did with respect to the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23).

Secondly, political action must be taken in order to demobilize, repatriate and reintegrate those combatants in their countries of origin. I am thinking in particular of the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda and former members of the M-23, as well as those of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). WHO will soon have been in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for nearly two years. There has been progress with regard to the SPLM/A-IO and commitments have been made with respect to other groups. I am pleased about that.

Lastly, I turn to the issue of tackling the illicit trafficking in natural resources, which sustains those armed groups, contributes to their survival and fuels an economy of war and predation. As long as such trafficking continues, no lasting stabilization can be envisaged. There is a need for strong consistent action by the countries of the region, as well as the ongoing commitment of international partners to transparency in the mining industry and a better traceability of minerals. In that context, the resolve of the ICGLR and its consultation with the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, demonstrated by the annual meeting in Paris of the ICGLR-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-United Nations Group of Experts Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, deserves to be welcomed.

Five years after the signing of the Framework agreement, visible and notable progress in its implementation would be an extremely positive sign of the commitment of all signatory countries to the stability and development of the Great Lakes region. Rest assured that France will continue to fully support the countries of the region in that undertaking.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to thank Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his comprehensive briefing on the general situation in the Great Lakes region over the past six months. I would also like to thank Ambassador Balé, Permanent Representative of the Congo, for his presence in the Chamber today and for his very useful statement.

We very much appreciate the great contribution that Special Envoy Djinnit has made for peace in the Great Lakes region. It must of course also be mentioned that we remain very grateful for his major contribution to peace in the Horn of Africa in his previous role.

Five years after the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the security situation in the Great Lakes region remains worrisome despite the many efforts to find peaceful solutions to the conflicts in the region. The continued instability in the countries of the Great Lakes region has displaced many people and caused a major humanitarian crisis, which requires close attention. However, we also note the modest progress registered in some of the key conflict-affected countries in the region.

For obvious reasons, I will focus mostly on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The challenge that the Democratic Republic of the Congo faces in terms of the presence of numerous armed groups operating in the eastern part of the country and the huge implications for the security of the country and the region cannot be overlooked. That is why we believe that there is a greater need to address the challenge, including in the context of cooperation among countries of the region within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

We thank Special Envoy Djinnit and the Permanent Representative of the Congo for stressing the destructive role of negative forces, including with respect to the

preparation for the elections. One hopes that the Council will consider this matter as a serious challenge. In the light of that, we once again welcome the progress made in the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the steps taken so far by the Government to organize the elections. We hope more efforts will be made in promoting confidence-building measures, which we believe are vital to creating the atmosphere needed for the successful holding of elections this year.

It is also absolutely necessary for all Congolese parties to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from making inflammatory statements, defuse the political tensions prevailing in the country and seize the positive momentum created to implement the 31 December political agreement, which is the only viable framework for resolving the current political impasse in the country.

We express appreciation for the role of countries in the region, particularly President Denis Sassou Nguesso, in his capacity as the current Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Stability and Cooperation Framework. Trust is of critical value, not only in business, it is perhaps even more critical in politics. It is in that spirit that we attach great importance to the role of the President of the Congo, Mr. Sassou Nguesso. We believe enhanced coordination between the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and other international partners will be vital to ensuring the successful holding of the elections. While taking note of the improvements in the overall security situation in Burundi, the current political situation can be resolved only peacefully through an inclusive dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the Constitution of Burundi.

It is imperative to ensure that the ongoing efforts towards constitutional reform are conducted through broad consensus on the part of all stakeholders so as to preserve the country's security and stability. The peace process laid out by the East African Community in that regard remains very important. We believe that coordination and coherence among the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations is key to making progress in the peace progress.

Looking forward, the work of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remain absolutely critical. We appreciate the outcome of the meeting held in Addis Ababa last month on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Framework, which brought together representatives of the signatories and guarantors to review the status of the implementation. We recognize that, five years on, important challenges remain. In the light of the regional dynamics and the continuing multifaceted challenges, the need to redouble efforts towards the full implementation of the Framework Agreement cannot be overemphasized.

Finally, we fully concur with the priority areas identified in the report with regard to achieving peace in the countries of the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Peruvian delegation for having convened this meeting, and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, for his informative briefing. We also thank the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Balé, for the illuminating information he has just provided us.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our condolences to the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the assassination of a priest last Sunday, killed by unidentified armed elements after holding mass.

The Great Lakes region is of strategic importance for the African continent, and the stability of the region is linked to the stability of the entire continent. It is essential that the countries in the region, which share many common interests and challenges, are able to find common language to try to address their problems. In order to do so, they must use the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, which continues to be a very useful instrument.

In order to stabilize the Great Lakes region, we must create a favourable environment and promote the economic development of the region. In an environment of peace and security, its great potential and natural resources would allow the flourishing of that important region, since peace would make it unnecessary to spend

the immense amounts of money wasted today on armed conflicts that are bleeding them dry. The international community must help those countries by assisting in the development of key economic sectors.

For the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, it is important that countries of the region develop policies that promote confidence, encourage neighbourly relations and help resolve differences through direct, frank and inclusive dialogue. They must also respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the other countries in the region. We hope that the international community will act based on respect for the sovereignty and views of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and help the country implement political agreements, advance security sector reform, strengthen governance in certain areas of the country, promote national reconciliation and work to achieve peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Neighbouring countries, regional organizations and subregional organizations have an important role to play alongside the international community. Leaders of neighbouring countries, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community are uniquely positioned to resolve the question of Burundi, the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other issues.

We take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to His Excellency President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Congolese Republic both as President of the Great Lakes Conference and of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, and to President João Lourenço of Angola for their efforts to resolve the problems that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region are facing.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is key to the comprehensive stabilization of the region. The international community must support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in that process. The country will be going through a decisive stage when it holds elections in December, which we hope will lead to the beginning of a new stage for the future of the Congolese people. The post-electoral process of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is as important as the current situation. That is why possible outcomes must be closely reviewed. The stability of the country is key to the entire region. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must complete its delicate task and collaborate closely with the Government. All stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should pool their efforts and try to find solutions to their differences, while prioritizing the interests of all Congolese.

We are pleased to note that the situation in Burundi has stabilized and that the members of the Council have been able to agree on a statement with regard to the country. We hope that Burundians will be able to resolve their problems internally through negotiations.

In conclusion, I would like to call on the United Nations to continue to play a leading role and to coordinate all efforts and mechanisms for the stabilization and development of that important region. Equatorial Guinea is prepared to make its modest contribution to that process.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I wanted to take the floor because we are at an important point in this region. I also want to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General back to the Security Council and, through him, to thank the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for everything it is doing. It was also extremely helpful to have the update from the Ambassador of the Congo. I would like to start by saying to my good friend the Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea that the contribution that his country makes is not modest. It is much more than that.

It has been five years since the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was signed. It has proved to be crucial to pursuing peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. But as the Special Representative and the Ambassador of the Congo have spelled out, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has always been at the centre of the Framework, and the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — the nerve centre — affects the stability of the region. As the Council has discussed in recent days, we are now at a critical juncture. What happens in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the next few months could be a defining moment for greater regional stability. We have a choice between seeing the situation improve or seeing it overturned. The United Kingdom, for its part, remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to the holding of free, fair and credible elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in December.

We welcome the progress that has been made in the five years since the signing of the Framework. I would like to highlight the increase in the participation of women and the commitment to greater regional and international cooperation in the course of advancing peace and security. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the fact that progress has not been made in the implementation of key elements, including the repatriation of foreign combatants. As the Ambassador of the Congo highlighted, we welcome efforts to reinvigorate the Framework, and urge all its signatories to implement it in full. We are very supportive of what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had to say on judicial issues.

We are also concerned about the continued proliferation of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in North and South Kivu, Tanganyika, Ituri and the Kasais. The results of that instability have indeed been devastating. A total of 4.5 million Congolese have fled their homes and communities. There are more internally displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo than anywhere else in Africa, and more than 13.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. We therefore support the other calls that have been made in the Council for regional players to come together in the interest of stability in the coming months. I also would like to endorse what the French Ambassador said about the importance of that regional cooperation.

I would like to conclude by talking about elections. Credible and constitutional elections are the only way to end the political crisis and achieve stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we urge the signatories of the Framework to ensure that peaceful and credible elections can take place in December 2018. That means that the electoral calendar must be respected, key milestones met and the confidence-building measures of the 2016 December agreement implemented in full. Critically, that includes freeing political prisoners and opening the political space and permitting peaceful demonstrations. This is a region that is in all our interests. The United Kingdom pledges to work together with partners to achieve progress.

I have some other remarks on other aspects of the region and the Framework, but I will save them for consultations.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for his detailed briefing. We have also noted the statement of Mr. Raymond Balé, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo and Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

We concur with the views of colleagues that the Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region is the cornerstone for ensuring stability in the Great Lakes region. We advocate full compliance with all obligations by all the signatories of this still relevant document, including respect for sovereignty, non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and the strengthening of confidence-building measures among the countries of the subregion.

In that regard, we support an early start to the operations of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism established by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to counter the Allied Democratic Forces. The fact that the Regional Oversight Mechanism among the countries of the region is holding regular meetings is a positive development and a testament to the fact that the structure is robust and can act independently and without external guidance.

We should note that, five full years after its signing, the Framework Agreement's military provisions are still far from being implemented. We commend the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which remains committed to combating gangs and stabilizing the situation. We support full cooperation between Kinshasa and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in that area. However, the armed groups continue to be active in the country and in the region as a whole. Their activities prolong inter-ethnic conflicts, fuel illegal trafficking in weapons and worsen the humanitarian situation. It is clear that a military solution alone cannot resolve the conflict. Comprehensive measures are needed to address its root causes, including the strengthening of State authority and the restoration of social institutions in territories liberated by the rebels.

We are concerned about the situation with respect to the repatriation of several hundred ex-combatants from the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) from Uganda and Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Of course, the ongoing contacts between the Congolese authorities with the leadership of the M-23 are welcome news, but the lack of progress in this area has already led to recidivism on the part of ex-M-23 combatants WHO have infiltrated the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Uganda. In that regard, we cannot help being concerned about the continuing mutual accusations, including about with regard to support for combatants and their recruitment of refugees into their ranks. We think that the countries involved should show maximum restraint and take steps to avoid any escalation, including by using the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, as provided for in the Framework Agreement.

Another challenge for the Framework Agreement is the issue of the presence of allies of Riek Machar, former Vice-President of South Sudan, on the territory of Democratic Republic of the Congo. We note the progress that has been made in addressing that situation, and we call on Mr. Djinnit, in cooperation with Special Representative Leila Zerrougui to do everything they can to make sure that the relevant provisions of resolution 2348 (2017) are implemented. We note the role of the Special Envoy in support of engagement in the region, in particular with private investors, with a view to generating momentum for economic cooperation among the countries of the region and building peace and trust among them.

Many countries of the region are at the stage of actively building or reforming their democratic institutions. Some have entered the crucial pre-elections period. We believe that any domestic political solution in those countries should lead to long-term stability if it is arrived at and accepted by the participants in the political process themselves. In our view, the imposition of solutions, much less attempts to subjectively interpret agreements reached, are unacceptable.

We believe that the responsibility for the normalization of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is borne by the Congolese people themselves. In that regard, constructive external assistance can play a positive role. Above all, what is necessary is the energetic and robust mediation efforts, coordinated with the united nations of such regional organizations as the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank Mr. Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and Ambassador Raymond Balé for their briefings. China commends the efforts undertaken by the Special Envoy to achieve peace and stability in the Great Lakes region and will continue to actively support his work.

In recent times, thanks to the joint efforts of the international community and regional countries, the peace process in South Sudan has been revitalized and progress made with regard to elections preparation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and national dialogue in Burundi. All of that points to an improvement in the political situation of the Great Lakes region. However, at the same time peace and stability remain fragile. In particular, the rampant activities of illegal armed groups, communal tensions and the lack of economic and social development are seriously undermining regional peace and development.

The Great Lakes region lies at the heart of the African continent. Maintaining the peace and the stability of that region has a direct bearing on the peace and the stability of the whole continent and requires the robust support and assistance of the international community. First, it is necessary to respect the leadership of regional countries and organizations. China has always called for African solutions to African problems and respects the sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of the countries concerned. China also respects the leading role played by regional organizations in mediation efforts. My country supports the full role played by regional and subregional organizations — such as the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community — in the mediation processes and encourages the countries of the region to continue to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. China hopes that the international community and regional countries and organizations will strengthen their cooperation so as to work together to find political solutions to the problems at hand.

Secondly, support should be given to security capacity-building in the countries of the region. The international community should increase the amount of assistance they give to the Great Lakes region in terms of peace and security capacity-building and help

the relevant countries to assume their responsibility for the maintenance of internal peace and security as early as possible. China welcomes the cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes region in response to the threat from armed groups and encourages those countries to implement the Nairobi Declaration and promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

China hopes that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will, as per the Council's mandate, strengthen coordination with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so as to play an active role in fighting armed groups in efforts to maintain peace and stability.

Thirdly, the root causes of the regional conflicts must be tackled. A lack of development is one the leading causes of instability in the region. The international community should honour its assistance commitment in a timely fashion and increase humanitarian assistance. At the same time, it is necessary to increase assistance and investment in the infrastructure of these countries, including health, education, trade and connectivity.

Efforts should be made to promote the economic and social development of the countries of the region and to find effective solutions with respect to youth employment and refugees. China supports the peace process in the Great Lakes region and has actively participated in relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations there. China has provided support to the countries of the region in terms of infrastructure, agriculture, the sustainable development of resources and energy, and has played an active and positive role in helping the countries of the region to enhance their self-development capacity and the livelihood of their people. We are ready, together with the rest of the international community to continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace and stability and the development of the region.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): The Ivorian delegation thanks Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, which chairs the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, for their updated briefings on the implementation of the Framework agreement on peace, security and cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Over the past three months, the Council has discussed the situation in the Great Lakes region on many occasions, addressing issues specific to certain countries of the region. Today's briefing provides us with a complete picture of the situation, in view of the progress made in the implementation of the Framework agreement on peace, security and cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region and the region, signed in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2013.

Despite that progress, it is clear that the prospects for lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region continue to face security, political and humanitarian challenges. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire commends the combined actions of the signatory States to the Framework agreement, as well international organizations such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community, in synergy with the African Union and the United Nations, to provide appropriate responses to the security, political and humanitarian challenges in the region.

My country also invites the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, to pursue his efforts towards the effective implementation of the Framework agreement, and supports the priorities jointly defined by the leaders of the signatory countries of the agreement and the Secretary-General with a view to the implementation of paragraph 24 of resolution 2389 (2017).

Given the persisting tensions in some countries of the region, Côte d'Ivoire encourages all stakeholders in the political processes and dialogues to increase their engagement in order to reach a definitive and lasting resolution of current crises. My country calls on all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement the 31 December 2016 agreement, in an atmosphere of calm, with a view to holding credible elections on 23 December 2018.

Turning to Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire commends the efforts of the facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, to relaunch the inter-Burundian political dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community. My delegation further welcomes the decision taken

by the Heads of State of the East African Community during the organization's summit, held on 23 February in Uganda, to continue to support the Burundian political process. We therefore invite all Burundian stakeholders to participate in this process, which should be both inclusive and aligned with the spirit of the Arusha agreement.

The deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation is especially alarming, particularly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is attributable to the attacks and violence by armed groups against civilians and United Nations forces, community-level conflicts and persistent clashes in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan. The consequences thereof include a mass exodus of people, which is fuelling a large flow of refugees and displaced persons, and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in those countries, specifically in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Hence my delegation welcomes the renewed willingness of the United Nations, during the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to neutralize armed groups by stepping up the means afforded to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Intervention Brigade, jointly with the Congolese authorities. We further commend the efforts undertaken by the international community, humanitarian organizations, neighbouring States and local non-governmental organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need. We encourage donors to contribute to the success of the high-level international conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, scheduled to be held on 13 April in Geneva.

The Addis Ababa Framework agreement sets out the outlines for the main national, regional and international measures that are necessary to end the persistent violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region. For the countries of the Great Lakes region, regional organizations and the international community, this remains the framework for adequate cooperation to tackle in a concerted manner the structural causes of the instability plaguing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. To that end, Côte d'Ivoire calls upon the United Nations and the whole of the international community to scale up their support to promote the more effective implementation of the agreement, which is crucial to peace and stability in this important area of Africa.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing and commend his tireless efforts and dedication to achieving peace and stability in the region. We welcome the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo — which chairs the Peace and Security Council Framework Regional Oversight Mechanism — Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé, and thank him for his briefing as well.

Kazakhstan commends the ongoing efforts of the signatory countries to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which is vital for achieving stability in the region. We welcome the growing ownership of the signatories in terms of implementing the Framework and working towards ongoing reforms. At the same time, we express concern at the recurring cycles of conflict and violence, as well as at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region.

The destabilizing activities of local and foreign armed groups are exacerbating political tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is necessary to support and strengthen the capacity of the Forces armies de la République démocratique du Congo to combat armed groups with the assistance of the Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also important to reactivate the regional follow-up mechanism to expedite the repatriation of disarmed combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries.

We welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy in working with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community, the European Union and other partners to develop a coordinated regional and international approach for stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, we hope that the recent meeting of the guarantors, held in Addis Ababa from 24 to 26 February, will bring positive results. The political aspiration and will of regional leaders are important.

We share the concern about the lack of progress in the inter-Burundian dialogue. We call on all stakeholders to make efforts to establish a constructive dialogue

in the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, leading to peaceful, free and inclusive elections. We therefore welcome the efforts of the facilitator, the former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa. The international community should continue to support the East African Community in the promotion of inclusive dialogue.

The suffering of the 11 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region should remain the focus of the international community. We commend the work of the Special Envoy in seeking durable solutions and coordinating the work of humanitarian organizations. Donors' commitments in this process are crucial. We hope that during the high-level humanitarian conference on the Democratic Republic of the Congo scheduled to take place in Geneva on 13 April, viable solutions will be found to provide vital support to the millions of IDPs and refugees.

Important factors for stability in conflict-affected countries are the observance of human rights and an effective system of justice. To that end, cooperation between judicial bodies of the countries of the region can become an effective mechanism in the eradication of impunity and thus should be supported.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources in the current conflict zones, which have become a source of income for armed groups and criminal networks, must be addressed by both the countries of the region and bilateral partners by ensuring the implementation of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We further note that the Peace and Security Council Framework is an essential foundation for sustainable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We therefore encourage all signatories to continue their efforts to fulfil its provisions with a view to addressing the root causes of conflict, including the strengthening of regional cooperation and economic integration.

To conclude, we would like to underscore the significance of strengthening the security-development nexus while addressing the current political, security, social and economic situation in the region. Such challenges also require a concerted response from regional and international partners. We are convinced that all United Nations agencies should deliver as one in providing assistance in a coordinated manner across the region.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank the Special Envoy and Ambassador Balé for their remarks this morning. I think that their briefings underlined very clearly the interconnected nature of the challenges facing the region and the need for an integrated approach that addresses the root causes of conflict. We fully support their efforts to strengthen regional dialogue in order to advance peace and development efforts in the Great Lakes.

Five years after its adoption, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region continues to be relevant for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, regional stability and the United Nations and the international community's engagement for peace in the region. Regional leadership and ownership of the Framework are critical. Complementary efforts such as the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework are more likely to be effective when accompanied by strong national leadership.

We fully support the important regional efforts under way to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. These include the revitalization of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the active engagement by the chairmanships of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on issues of regional stability, peaceful electoral processes and transition. In addition, the use of the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, which helped defuse tensions involving a February cross-border incident in North Kivu, is welcome. Those examples illustrate how further strengthening the region's forums for dialogue, information-sharing and transparency, as well as increased joint monitoring, will enhance mutual trust and transparency. That could help the region resolve key issues central to building sustainable peace. The United Nations has an important role to play in supporting those efforts, and we fully support the work of the Special Envoy in that regard.

The current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the most pressing issue facing the region. The severe humanitarianissue, the delicate political situation and increased insecurity are of great concern, and also potentially threaten regional stability. We fully support regional efforts to resolve the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Close

cooperation with and among those actors continues to be essential, however. For that reason, we welcome the current cooperation among the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We firmly support the efforts of the Republic of the Congo, as ICGLR Chair, together with Angola, for fostering dialogue with the Democratic Republic of Congo. In partnership with regional actors, we must all support the holding of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections on 23 December 2018, with the ensuing democratic transfer of power in accordance with the Constitution and the New Year's Eve agreement. That is necessary to foster stability and peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For there to be lasting peace and stability in the region, it is essential that women's voices are heard. We strongly endorse the call from the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for greater support for women's participation in peace and political processes, especially in the context of elections. More needs to be done to implement the Nairobi declarations and to take necessary actions involving disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement. The Judicial Cooperation Network could also help in the areas of judicial cooperation and combating impunity.

The Great Lakes region is home to an estimated 130 million people spread across five countries. The people of the region have suffered from decades of instability and conflict. Successfully overcoming challenges will require concerted action at the national, regional and international levels that links peace and security and economic and social development. Continued leadership from the region, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will be essential if the people of the Great Lakes region are to finally have the peace and sustainable development that they desire.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his valuable briefing and his efforts to establish dialogue and cooperation with the countries of the Great Lakes region in order to overcome the various challenges they face. I also thank Ambassador Balé of the Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as Chair of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, for his briefing.

The Great Lakes region faces serious challenges in terms of security, stability, declines in development indicators, and the spread of armed groups that pose the main obstacle to the establishment of State authority. The latter threaten the lives of millions of civilians and play a role in pillaging natural resources, thereby depriving the people of the region of important development resources. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate and raise serious concern, given the large number of refugees, internally displaced persons and those in need of humanitarian assistance. Those challenges can be addressed only through cooperation among the countries of the region, collective responsibility and finding sustainable solutions to strengthening regional and international partnerships, in particular with the African Union, the United Nations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the European Union and the Southern African Development Community. Stability in the Great Lakes region and neighbouring countries will undoubtedly affect in a positive way the potential for development, security and improving the living standards of the people of Central Africa in specific and across the continent of Africa in general. In that regard, I would like to reflect on four main aspects.

First, concerning the political aspect, establishing security in any one of the States in the region closely depends upon its political stability, in particular with regard to the peaceful transfer of power and the sustained engagement of all segments of society in political processes. There will be no progress without empowering the national institutions of those States, while building advanced political frameworks and cooperation among the countries of the region, as well as the engagement of their Governments as part of international efforts made by regional and international organizations. We remain concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in those areas marred by political tensions. In order to improve the situation and establish comprehensive peace, the following priorities should be implemented: ending conflicts in the countries experiencing political tensions; neutralizing illegal armed groups; expeditiously addressing the humanitarian crises resulting from forced displacement; and protecting human rights and preventing impunity in the Great Lakes region.

Secondly, the United Nations missions in countries neighbouring the Great Lakes region are the largest in terms of their human component and annual budgets.

Such contributions attest to the firm belief in, and the vital and critical role of, peacekeeping operations in restoring State authority, achieving peace and stability and alleviating humanitarian suffering, particularly in the Central African region which has suffered for many years. Radical solution must be found to address the problems leading to humanitarian suffering, namely, in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Burundi.

Thirdly, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region was described as the framework of hope when the agreement was signed, in 2013, and as a MODEL to bring about stability. Peoples hoped that it would be a cornerstone for stability and advancement in the whole Great Lakes region. Regrettably, the agreement is entering its fifth year with unprecedented humanitarian suffering and an increase in the number of refugees, with 11 million forcibly displaced persons. In that regard, we reiterate the need for countries of the region to commit to the agreement, and we commend the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy. We look forward to the implementation of the provisions of the agreement and overcoming all obstacles.

Fourthly, the regrettable security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken a turn for the worse, as evidenced by the escalation of violence by armed groups fighting among themselves and controlling natural resources. They even attack peacekeepers in United Nations missions, illustrated by the worst attack of its kind in the history of the United Nations, which was launched by the Allied Democratic Forces against Tanzanian peacekeepers on 7 December 2017, killing 15 peacekeepers and injuring 53 others. That attests to the need to unify the efforts of Governments of the Central African region to combat armed groups in the region, limit their influence and eliminate them gradually.

In conclusion, we hope that the conference to be held in Geneva in three days' time will contribute to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. It will be the first-ever humanitarian donors' conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its goal is to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Congolese people, and, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are keen on promoting the role of the Committee in anchoring security and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through continuous communication with Member States, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all the relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First of all, let me thank Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing and, above all, his important work. I would also like to thank Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé of the Republic of the Congo for his statement and his personal efforts.

In the light of the fifth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, I will make three points: first, the Framework is as relevant today as it was five years ago; secondly, the political instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi constitute an additional serious threat to peace and security in the region; and, thirdly, we should increase coordination with the countries in the region on these issues.

As to my first point, the continued relevance of the Framework, five years since its signing, significant progress has been achieved, as others, such as our colleagues from Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, have said today. The presence of some foreign armed groups has been reduced. Judicial and development cooperation in the region has increased. Regional organizations like the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) have been strengthened. However, significant challenges remain.

Armed groups continue to operate within and across the borders. Members of foreign armed groups, including the Mouvement du 23 mars and the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda, have yet to be repatriated. The Framework remains the viable political framework to deal with these challenges. Its relevance was once again demonstrated after the border clashes between the Rwandan and Congolese armies on 13 February. We welcome the investigation by the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the ICGLR in that regard. We furthermore welcome the renewed commitment of the signatories to the Framework, as communicated after the high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism last October.

As to my second point, the political instability in the region, security challenges in the region have evolved, and 2018 is a crucial year for peace and security in the Great Lakes region. Elections are due to be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

The contested referendum on constitutional reform is planned in Burundi. But every single political and security crisis in the Great Lakes region has cross-border effects. The Great Lakes region is home to the biggest displacement crisis in Africa. It is of course the primary responsibility of Governments to prevent the suffering of their peoples. We call on the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi to respect fundamental human rights and open up political space to enable the full and free participation of peaceful political parties, civil society and the media, which hold the key to opening the door to peaceful, inclusive and credible political processes and to national and regional stability. The meaningful participation of women is vital to achieve that end. We welcome the words of the Special Envoy on his ambitions to include women at all levels in political processes, as he just mentioned.

As to my third point, the importance of regional coordination, we often talk of African solutions to African problems, and our Chinese colleague just did so. We agree that only regionally owned and shared efforts will provide sustainable solutions to regional problems. The Framework continues to serve as an important platform to enable such solutions. It is geared towards addressing the root causes of conflict so as to put an end to the recurring cycles of violence. We welcome the role that the African Union, the ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community have played in strengthening the implementation of the Framework. We strongly believe in their important role in mitigating evolving security challenges in the region. We strongly support the Special Envoy in focusing his good offices on supporting those efforts.

In conclusion, there is a proverb that says, "If a man is stung by a bee, he does not destroy all beehives". This is true for the Framework as well. Challenges remain, but with commitment and effort its implementation will be strengthened. Let us aim for reaching that goal as we advance towards the next anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Enhancing peace, security and cooperation is crucial for the people of the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia welcomes the briefing of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, and we thank him for his work. We also welcome the briefing by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo, Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé, whose country is chairing the Regional Monitoring Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Despite the size of the conflict, Bolivia is optimistic about the efforts of regional and international partners to promote sustained and concerted support for the implementation of the agreements reached. On 24 February 2013, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region was adopted. The agreement is a regional milestone that endorses national, regional and international actions, whose main objective is to eradicate violence through cooperation among its signatory countries with a view to building lasting peace and stability by addressing the root causes of conflict, deepening collaboration and building confidence among neighbouring countries. In that regard, we call on the signatory countries of the Addis Ababa agreement to continue to promote the search for peace and to consolidate the full implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Bolivia supports the political initiatives and recommendations set out in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/209) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which, among other objectives, seeks to have a positive impact on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plans, as well as on the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of the various insurgent groups, both Congolese and foreign, operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other countries in the region.

Resolution 2389 (2017), on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, reaffirmed the intention of all its members to support the regional initiative by emphasizing the need for full respect for the principles of non-interference, good neighbourliness and regional cooperation. Furthermore, the resolution emphasizes that the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources is paramount, as that is "one of the major factors fuelling and exacerbating conflicts in the Great Lakes region".

As one of the world's richest in natural resources, this region is unfortunately currently experiencing a quasi-imposed reality. The large multinationals and international consortiums operating in the area have

become a factor that contributes through harmful neocolonial mechanisms to the weakening of the ability of States to use and enjoy their wealth. The promotion of the purchase of diamonds, copper, cobalt and coltan, among other resources that are illegally exploited by armed groups, underwrites their war-making activities, providing them with the means that appear to perpetuate conflicts. Indeed, the activity of armed groups in the region, such as the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army, anti-balaka or ex-Séléka factions, the Mayi-Mayi groups and various other groups that are joining the inter-ethnic and intercommunity clashes in different areas of the region, constantly threaten the consolidation of security, peace and stability.

Bolivia once again expresses its concern about the environment of violence and the deteriorating security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. We also express our concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region, which is deepening the complexity of the conflict, with millions of internally displaced persons and refugees, WHO constitute the most vulnerable populations. Addressing the climate of insecurity in the region, the current political impasse and the continuing uncertainty surrounding election timetables are key issues that need to be addressed.

Finally, aware that the challenges to achieving stable and permanent peace in some of the countries of the world remain complex, Bolivia considers it essential to strengthen the mechanisms that contribute to increasing confidence through strategic alliances, strengthened dialogue and close collaboration with regional and subregional partners. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region is a great example that should be replicated in support of each and every initiative that favours, first, conflict prevention, and, more important, peacebuilding.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Allow me to start with expressing my thanks to Special Envoy Said Djinnit and Ambassador Serge Balé of the Congo for their very informative briefings.

Let me first focus on the current political and security situation in the Great Lakes region, since it has a huge impact on the large population movements and directly affects the humanitarian situation of the people on the ground. The preconditions for stabilization in the whole region are well known. They include conducting reliable electoral processes that build the trust of citizens in the authorities, re-establishing the rule of law and respecting human rights and good governance, since, despite all the efforts to date, the number of serious violations in those areas has been increasing.

Tensions around the political processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as South Sudan and the Central African Republic, still remain great obstacles to stability in the region. The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has strategic importance. Implementing the confidence-building measures and ensuring a peaceful electoral process by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are critical to the stability of the Central Africa region. Moreover, cross-border issues related to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are of importance in order to address the root causes of the conflict in the region. Countering illegal cross-border activities is an essential condition for the limitation of the destructive activity of armed groups and for the successful submission of combatants to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

We are concerned about the recent significant increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, as there is a clear link between forced displacement and instability in the region. We also believe that greater attention must be paid to the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. An effective international response is needed to put an end to violence and human rights violations and abuses, especially in the case of attacks that target women and children.

We appreciate the efforts made to implement of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. However, more progress is still required in that regard. The full implementation of the Framework is in the interests of all its signatory States. They should increase their commitment and ensure that the achievements in that regard will not be lost. We should bear in mind that the conflicts in different parts of the region have various causes. More effort should be put into preventive diplomacy and the promotion of good practices. The international community must demonstrate its continuing interest in the situation on the ground.

Ms. French (United States of America): I would like to thank Ambassador Balé and Special Envoy Djinnit for their briefings and their work to advance the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

A little more than a month ago, the United States was pleased to join with fellow donors, the signatories and the guarantors of the Framework agreement in Addis Ababa for the fifth anniversary of that agreement. That forum proved a useful opportunity to take stock of the accomplishments that have occurred under the Framework agreement, to review those elements of the agreement that remained unfulfilled and to discuss ways in which the Framework agreement mechanism could be more effective and work within the existing regional organizations. The signatories to the Framework agreement understood that there were inherent linkages between peace, development and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the prospects for long-term stability across the broader region.

That theme is also reflected in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the Great Lakes region (see S/2018/209). He stressed that the uncertainty surrounding the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is compounded by the persistent activities of armed groups in the territory. However, we would take that point a step further. The political impasse resulting from the delayed elections has heightened tensions and undermined the already weak to non-existent State authority and risks increased violence and unrest, as it provides space for armed groups and other malign actors to continue to operate. We would urge the Special Envoy to focus on ensuring that the elections go ahead and that the 31 December agreement is fully implemented.

We agree that we must continue to urge action against the armed groups operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We cannot pretend that there is any solution to those problems without the full implementation of the 31 December agreement, the electoral provisions in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the electoral calendar.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo must hold inclusive and credible elections in December that lead to a peaceful democratic transfer of power. No more delays will be tolerated. We were particularly heartened in Addis Ababa to see consensus on the importance of the election in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to regional stability. The continued strong leadership of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will be critical ahead of the elections in order to ensure that the preparations continue to move forward and that potential spoilers are held accountable.

While we remain focused on the Democratic Republic of the Congo during this critical period, we must not lose sight of other challenges to peace and security in the Great Lakes region. In that regard, we are particularly concerned about the planned constitutional referendum in Burundi on 17 May. We have already seen numerous reports of violence and the intimidation and harassment of those perceived to be opponents of the referendum. We are concerned that the referendum will exacerbate the political tensions in Burundi and that the development of the proposed constitutional revisions has not been conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner. Failure to respect the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement risks further destabilizing Burundi with unpredictable repercussions for both the country and the region.

As is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the region has an important role to play in promoting stability in Burundi. We urge the regional stakeholders to intensify their efforts to foster dialogue and to bring an end to the long-standing political impasse in Burundi. The role of Special Envoy Djinnit will be critical in working to strengthen and to support the regional mechanisms advancing peace and security in the Great Lakes region as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi go through this very important period. We urge him to continue to engage with key stakeholders in the region and to inform us of any additional steps necessary to advance his mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We would like to thank Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region (S/2018/209). We are also grateful for the information

shared by Ambassador Raymond Serge Balé on the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

Peru acknowledges the efforts and the commitment of the signatory countries to implement the Framework and the important role of the guarantor countries. We express our support for the efforts under way.

We highlight the importance of the regional approach in responding to the complex and unstable situation in the Great Lakes region. We believe that the efforts made by the various parties in the light of the common challenges must be consistent in order to be complementary and to thereby bring about more effective cooperation to the benefit of all. We therefore support the processes of political dialogue and mutual understanding in the region. We believe that is necessary in order to deal with the challenges in the areas of security, humanitarian assistance, the protection of human rights and the promotion of sustainable development, in short, in order to achieve sustainable peace in the region.

More specifically, we would like to reiterate the need to comply with the electoral calendar in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to move forward in the inter-Burundian dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community. We deem it appropriate that such processes be carried out in an inclusive manner with a view to strengthening the institutional framework and accountability, and we call for broad participation of the population, and especially that of women and young people committed to sustaining peace and developing their respective countries.

We must also express our concern about the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes. Violence and insecurity generated by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Burundi have produced more than 11 million displaced persons in vulnerable situations WHO need to be protected. We stress the importance of prioritizing the protection of women, girls and boys.

Peru supports the immediate priorities identified in the report, which involve initiatives aimed at promoting peace, including firm action against armed groups, as well as urgent coordination to address the humanitarian crisis and a determined fight against impunity.

The meeting rose at 12.40pm.

United Nations S/PV.8228

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8228th meeting
Tuesday, 10 April 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh/Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Canada, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/175, S/2018/321 and S/2018/322, which contain the texts of three draft resolutions, respectively.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution contained in document S/2018/321, submitted by Canada, France, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): For years, as part of its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council has been mobilized on the issue of chemical weapons. After the chemical attacks in Ghouta in 2013, the Security Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013), which provided for the complete dismantling of the chemical arsenal of the Syrian regime. Russia, as co-sponsor of that resolution, had guaranteed its implementation. Despite that guarantee, the Damascus regime has never complied with its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013) and has never renounced — as we saw again on 7 April — the use of chemical weapons against its civilian population.

Five years after the Council's adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), we note that the general subject of chemical weapons remains tragically topical. The upcoming voting marks our fourth meeting in less than a week on this issue. Yesterday we met in an emergency meeting (see S/PV.8225) following a new chemical-weapons massacre in Douma, Syria, whose appalling images left us shocked. Last month we met to discuss the unacceptable attack in Salisbury (see S/PV.8203). Last year we met day after day after the terrible attack of Khan Shaykhun. That shows the deterioration of the situation and how serious the stakes are today for our security.

The use of chemical weapons is so abominable that it has been banned for almost 100 years, and the international community began years ago to eliminate them. As such, the chemical non-proliferation regime, which we have patiently developed and strengthened, is one of the pillars of our collective security architecture, at the heart of our security system. Yet today it is under serious threat. We face the cynical, barbaric and all-out use of chemical weapons against civilian populations.

The Douma attacks once again illustrated the abject brutality of the Syrian regime's resolute military strategy. Such acts constitute war crimes or even crimes against humanity. They increase the risk of dangerous normalization — tolerating the return of these agents of fear and death is nothing more than a blank cheque to all those who would like to use them. To allow the normalization of the use of chemical weapons without responding is to let the genie of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — which pose an existential threat to us all — out of the bottle. It would mark a serious and reprehensible setback to the international order that we have all patiently helped to develop. The consequences would be terrible, and we would all pay the price.

That is why we cannot accept it. France will do all it can to prevent impunity for the use of chemical weapons. It is in that spirit that we launched an international partnership last January. The demise of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in November, due to the Russian veto to protect Al-Assad's regime, sent a dangerous signal of impunity. It deprived us of an essential deterrent tool. It left a vacuum that the Syrian regime has rushed to exploit, and which yesterday's atrocities have tragically reminded us of.

The American initiative to re-establish an independent mechanism, based on a balanced approach and taking into account the concerns expressed by every member of the Council, enables us to fill that glaring void. Such a mechanism would support the inquiry that has already been launched by the OPCW. It would also respect the essential criteria of independence,

without any interference, and impartiality to which each member of the Council has committed. Such a mechanism would have a mandate to attribute responsibility for the attacks. Only the combination of those two criteria — independence and a mandate to attribute responsibility — will make that mechanism effective, and therefore dissuasive. Let me be clear: in view of the gravity of the 7 April attack, France will not accept any third-rate or sham mechanism whose independence and impartiality would not be genuinely ensured. That is what the Security Council owes today to the Syrian victims of chemical attacks and to the entire international community, whose security is threatened by the chemicals in the hands of the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.

Since the threat is of an existential nature for us all, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction must, more than ever, be among the top priorities of the Security Council. If there is one area in which the Council has a moral and political responsibility to convene and act, it is this one. If there is one domain for which the credibility of the Council is at stake, where tactical games have no place, it is this one.

This is one of those moments when we have no choice but to act because what is at stake is essential. We cannot allow the chemical non-proliferation regime, and with it our entire security architecture — along with the principles and values that underpin our action — to crack and disintegrate before our very eyes. Today's vote is one of those key moments, one of those moments of truth. On behalf of France, I therefore call on each member of the Council to properly gauge and assume its responsibilities now and to vote in favour of the American draft resolution (S/2018/321).

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): We have reached a decisive moment as the Security Council. On Saturday the first haunting images appeared from Douma, in Syria. We gathered around this table yesterday (see S/PV.8225) to express our collective outrage. We then collectively agreed that the Council needed to take steps to determine exactly what happened in Douma and to put an end to these barbaric attacks.

The United States has put forward a draft resolution (S/2018/321) that accomplishes those shared goals. For weeks we have been working with every single delegation on the Council to develop a new attribution mechanism for chemical-weapons attacks in Syria. We held open and transparent negotiations so that every delegation could provide its input. And we went the extra mile for one Council member. We adopted paragraph after paragraph of Russia's proposed draft resolution (S/2018/175). We tried to take every Russian proposal that did not compromise the impartiality, independence or professionalism of a new attribution mechanism.

After the Douma attack, we updated our draft resolution with common sense changes. Our proposal condemns the attack. It demands unhindered humanitarian access for the people in Douma. It calls on the parties to give maximum cooperation to the investigation. And it creates the attribution mechanism that we worked so hard with each member to develop.

The draft resolution is the bare minimum that the Council can do to respond to the attack. The United States did everything possible to work towards Council unity on this text. Again, we accepted every recommendation that did not compromise the impartiality and independence of the proposed attribution mechanism.

I want to say a brief word about Russia's draft resolution, which is also before us for a vote. Our draft resolutions are similar, but there are important differences. The key point is that our draft resolution guarantees that any investigations will truly be independent. Russia's draft resolution gives Russia itself the chance to choose the investigators and then to assess the outcome. There is nothing independent about that. The United States is not asking to choose the investigators, and neither should Russia. The United States is not asking to review the findings of any investigation before they are final, and neither should Russia. All of us say that we want an independent investigation. Our draft resolution achieves that goal. Russia's does not. This is not an issue that more time or more consultations could have resolved. At a certain point, you are either for an independent and impartial investigation or you are not. And now that the Douma attack has happened, this is not a decision that we can delay any longer.

The United States calls on all Security Council members to vote in favour of our draft resolution and to abstain or vote against the Russian draft resolution. The Syrian people are counting on us.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today the delegation of the United States is once again trying to mislead the international

community and is taking yet another step towards confrontation by putting to a vote a draft resolution (S/2018/321) that does not enjoy the unanimous support of the members of the Security Council.

It is not true that it meets almost all our requirements. The text is nothing more than an attempt to resurrect, unchanged, the former Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), established to investigate cases of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Russia has always emphasized that it will not support that approach. The JIM became a puppet in the hands of anti-Damascus forces, and it covered itself with shame when it issued a guilty verdict for a sovereign State without credible evidence. The American draft resolution represents an identical reproduction of all of the former Mechanism's flawed working methods. The new mechanism would conduct investigations as it sees fit, with no reference to the standards of the Chemical Weapons Convention. That has nothing to do with independence, which the draft resolution's sponsors and its closest allies only pretend to care about. We know the worth of such independence. It is true anarchy and manipulation.

At every stage of our work on the American initiative we have insisted that the Secretary-General should select the staff for the investigative mechanism on the basis of the broadest possible geographic representation, with subsequent approval by the Security Council. Visits to the sites of the incidents and strict adherence to the principle of sequential actions while ensuring the preservation of the material evidence should be not optional but mandatory working principles. In a collective decision, the Security Council would determine who was responsible in any given case of the use of chemical weapons, based on reliable evidence that would leave no room for doubt about the correctness of the conclusions. There is nothing about this in the American draft resolution. The authors know that it goes against the Russian position and will not be adopted. But they are obstinately sticking to their line.

It is clear that today's provocative step has nothing to do with a desire to investigate what happened in Douma, Syria, on 7 April. An attributive mechanism is not necessary in order to initially establish the facts. Even if we could conceive of the improbable scenario in which the draft resolution creating the mechanism was adopted today, it would take several months to put the mechanism together and fine-tune its operations. Establishing who is to blame is the final link in a very long chain of actions. Here, in front of everyone, I would once again like to ask the sponsors why they need the mechanism when they have already identified the guilty parties before the investigation. They do not need it. They do not want to hear anything. They do not want to hear that no traces of a chemical attack were found in Douma. They have simply been looking for an excuse the whole time, and the provocateurs among the White Helmets have very kindly provided it. This is all reminiscent of a kind of spring fever. Exactly a year ago, in April 2017, a similar scenario unrolled with the chemical provocation in Khan Shaykhun, followed by a missile strike.

The fact is that the authors of the draft resolution are motivated by completely different priorities. They have pinned their hopes on the assumption that the draft resolution will not be adopted. That is what they want, and it is something that they can bank along with the rest of their reasons justifying the use of force against Syria. For several days now, the Administration in Washington, D.C., has been keeping the international community in suspense while discussing the so-called important decisions being prepared. Only yesterday we heard how anxiously Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura spoke about the current escalation extending beyond Syria's borders (see S/PV.8225), and we know that the Secretary-General is also very concerned about that.

It is clear that Russia will once again be the target of the propaganda cannons. My American colleague will painstakingly enumerate the Russian vetoes on Syria. It is not impossible that she has taken upon herself a capitalist commitment to using the reckless policies of the United States to achieve some sort of personal record in that regard. We are using the veto to protect international law, peace and security and to ensure that the United States does not to drag the Security Council into its misadventures. The United States representative says that we are covering up for someone. Russia is in Syria at the invitation of its lawful Government in order to combat international terrorism, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, while the United States is covering up for militias and terrorists.

If the United States has decided to carry out an illegal military venture — and we still hope that it will think better of it — it must answer for that itself. It wants to dump this draft resolution, which has been sitting on the shelf for a long time, onto the Security Council in order to find a pretext. The United States representative

herself has said repeatedly that if the Council does not make a decision, the United States will make a decision on its own. Why is the suta purposely undermining the Council's authority by promoting a draft resolution that we know will not go through? And a lot of people said that yesterday during consultations. We urge the Americans to give sober consideration to the potential this presents for confrontation, to think better of it and to withdraw its draft resolution from a vote. Russia cannot support it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall first put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2018/321, submitted by Canada, France, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:
Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

Against:
Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Russian Federation

Abstaining:
China

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 12 votes in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): This is a sad day for the Security Council; it is a sad day for the cause of universal norms and standards; and it is a sad day for the non-proliferation regime. But, above all, it is a very sad day for the people of Douma, who now are without the protection that the international system was set up to provide for them.

This is the fourth time in six days that the Council has discussed chemical weapons. Yesterday 14 members of the Security Council called for an investigation. Several members called on the permanent five (P-5) to assume their responsibilities to uphold the universal prohibition on weapons of mass destruction (WMD). As a P-5 member, the United Kingdom was ready to do that and was joined by France and the United States. Conversely, by vetoing, Russia has crossed a line in the international order, and worse, if possible, history is repeating itself one year on from Khan Shaykun.

Russia helped to create the original independent investigation that attributed Khan Shaykun to the Syrian regime and concluded that sarin, which can be developed only by a State actor, had been used. But last autumn, Russia vetoed renewal of that mechanism on not one but three occasions. The reason is clear: it is because Russia would rather cross the WMD line than risk sanction of its ally Syria. Instead, we are asked to believe that the Russian version of this latest attack should be the one that the Security Council believes.

Russia is not authorized by the Security Council to carry out an investigation in Syria. Russia says that there were no traces of a chemical attack. No traces were found by whom? I repeat: Russia is not authorized to carry out an investigation on behalf of the Security Council. We need an independent investigative mechanism for that purpose, and only that sort of mechanism can have the confidence of the Security Council, the confidence of the membership of the United Nations and the confidence of the people of Syria.

Sadly, reports of chemical-weapon attacks in Syria have continued since the original Russian veto, in November. It has become very clear that Russia will do what it takes to protect Syria, whatever the compelling evidence of the crimes committed, and to shut down further investigation and discussion of those crimes. This has come at the cost of Russia's own obligations and credibility as a permanent member of the Council, as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and as a declared and supposed supporter of peace in Syria.

The Security Council has been unable to act solely because Russia has abused the power of veto to protect Syria from international scrutiny for the use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people. Even today open-source investigations have located a chlorine cylinder, the same kind that the Joint Investigative Mechanism has found that the Syrian regime used, atop a house in Douma full of people who had clearly died from respiratory problems.

I frankly doubt that in 48 hours Russia has verified all similar reports and can conclude that they are all fake. They are not fake; they need to be looked at and investigated by a proper independent mechanism such as the Council was prepared today to pass.

Russia's credibility as a member of the Council is now in question. We will not stand idly by and watch Russia continue to undermine the global norms that have ensured the security of all of us, including Russia, for decades. As a P-5 member, the United Kingdom will stand up for international peace and security; it is our moral duty. It is a matter of shame that Russia has once again blocked a draft resolution. The Russian Ambassador mentioned that it was not a question of counting the number of Russian vetoes. I beg to differ. To quote Lenin, quantity has a quality all of its own. Russia's actions today are a step against the rules and authority of the Security Council and the wider United Nations. They are a step against international peace and security and non-proliferation, and they are a step against humanity.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is deeply concerned at reports that the use of chemical weapons has caused civilian deaths and casualties in Syria. We are firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual, under any circumstances. This has been China's clear and consistent position.

China supports the carrying out of a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria so as to achieve results that are based on substantial evidence and can pass the litmus test of history and truth, bringing the perpetrators and the parties responsible for the use of chemical weapons to justice. There should be no prejudgment of the outcome or arbitrary conclusions.

The Security Council has a consensus on condemning the chemical-weapons attacks in Syria, establishing a new investigative mechanism and identifying the perpetrators of the chemical-weapon attack in Syria. All members of the Security Council should remain united and insist that the Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons be the main channel for dealing with the Syrian chemical-weapon issue, in an effort to seek an appropriate solution through consultations.

The draft resolution that was just put to the vote in the Security Council (S/2018/321) had elements of consensus, including condemning the chemical-weapons attacks in Syria, establishing a new investigative mechanism and urging all parties to cooperate with the investigation. However, on some specific measures, it does not take full consideration of some of the major concerns of certain Security Council members on improving the mechanism's working methods and ensuring an objective and impartial investigation. Against that backdrop and in the light of our long-standing position on the question of chemical weapons in Syria, China abstained in the voting on the draft resolution.

The issue of Syria is currently at a critical juncture. China remains firmly seized of the situation and is deeply concerned at the developments on the ground. China has always called for respecting the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and insists on seeking a peaceful solution to the dispute. We oppose the use or threat of force in international relations and believe that any action taken should be in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The international community and all parties concerned should stand firm on the imperative need to seek a political solution to the question of Syria, step up their support for the United Nations main channel of mediation, and push for all Syrian parties to seek a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political solution to the question of Syria, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015).

China is ready to work with all parties in an effort to push for a political solution to the issue of Syria.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation voted in favour of the draft resolution initiated by the United States (S/2018/321) for two main reasons.

With regard to the first reason, Côte d'Ivoire believes that the draft resolution conforms to our firm belief that any and all use of chemical weapons in wartime as in peacetime must be condemned and requires investigation to determine those responsible for such acts to hold them accountable. In that regard, the draft resolution submitted by the United States clearly conveys the resolve of the international community to see perpetrators of chemical attacks identified and prosecuted so that they are accountable for their acts.

Concerning the second reason, Côte d'Ivoire believes that the text of the draft resolution provides

guarantees with regard to the credibility of the outcome of investigations. The text insulates such investigations from any political influence and clears a path for the experts' professionalism and independence and the impartiality of the mechanism itself.

By voting in favour of the draft resolution, the Ivorian delegation wanted to show its solidarity with Syrian victims who are suffering from the consequences of an endless war and to help meaningfully safeguard international peace and security. Sadly, my delegation notes that divisiveness within the Security Council prevented the adoption of the American draft resolution, which Côte d'Ivoire painfully regrets. It is time that efforts be made to unify the Council if we want truly to work to achieve international peace and security.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): The use of chemical weapons is a serious atrocity, which may amount to a crime against humanity and a war crime. Accountability for such acts is a requirement under international law — and central to achieving sustainable peace in Syria. Draft resolution S/2018/321, presented by the United States, addressed the most pressing needs related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including the role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Fact-finding Mission, securing humanitarian access and, last but not least, creating a new, truly independent and impartial accountability mechanism. We thank the American delegation for its ongoing leadership in the negotiations. We appreciate its flexibility and fully understand and share the rationale behind putting this text to the vote today.

Because of the use of the veto by the Russian Federation, the Security Council failed once again today to establish an accountability mechanism. By that act, Russia undermined the ability of the Council to fulfil its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations: to maintain international peace and security. We are disappointed that, for some States, political alliances and calculations proved to be more important than the need to end the horrors confronting the civilian population and the unacceptable loss of human life in Syria.

Poland supports the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, the Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, and other instruments that might facilitate bringing the perpetrators of chemical attacks to justice. We will join all genuine efforts to achieve that goal.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia reiterates in the strongest terms its categorical condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and the weaponization of chemical agents as an unjustifiable and criminal act, wherever, whenever and by whomever they are committed, as such use constitutes a serious crime under international law and a threat to international peace and security. There is no justification for their use regardless of the circumstances and of who uses them. We therefore reaffirm the need to maintain the unity of the Security Council so as to ensure that those who have used chemical weapons are held accountable and brought to justice so that their actions do not go unpunished.

In that regard, we reiterate our support for the work being carried out by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Fact-finding Mission so that, in line with their mandates, they can carry out the work entrusted to them in the most methodical, technical and trustworthy manner possible with the support of an independent, impartial, complete and conclusive investigation. We firmly reiterate that the work of an investigative mechanism is essential to ensuring accountability for such terrible acts. To that end, it must be independent, impartial and representative so that a transparent, impartial, complete, reliable and conclusive investigation can be carried out, and, for that to happen, we face the great challenge and the responsibility of not politicizing or instrumentalizing the Security Council.

My delegation voted against the draft resolution (S/2018/321) presented by the United States of America, first of all, because we regret that once again a draft resolution was put to the vote with the knowledge that it would not be adopted by the Security Council, and, moreover, because there has already been a series of threats of the use of force accompanied by threats of unilateral action, which, of course, runs directly counter to the Charter of the United Nations. Bolivia once again makes clear its firm rejection of taking unilateral actions, because any unilateral military action that does not enjoy the approval of the Security Council is entirely illegal and contravenes the principles explicitly set forth in the Charter. In addition, any unilateral

military action would violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Arab Republic of Syria, and would affect the stability of the political process and the agreements on which progress has been made under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): In my statement yesterday (see S/PV.8225) I urged the Security Council not to stand idly by and watch as a spectator while chemical weapons were being used in Syria. In our opinion, the Council should act, condemn, protect, and hold to account those responsible. Those elements are all reflected in draft resolution (S/2018/321) put forward by the United States, and that is why the Kingdom of the Netherlands voted in favour of that draft resolution. We thank the United States delegation for drafting the text. We appreciate the earlier rounds of negotiations and the flexibility displayed at yesterday's late-night round. Together with others, we are extremely disappointed that an attempt to set up an effective mechanism of attribution on the use of chemical weapons has failed once again.

Today we witnessed the twelfth overall Russian use of the veto concerning Syria, including six pertaining to chemical weapons. As I said yesterday, if the Russian representative claims that the chemical-weapons attack in Syria is a fabrication, he should not veto the draft resolution. By vetoing this draft resolution, the Russian Federation assumes a heavy responsibility for continued impunity and the horrible use of chemical weapons in Syria. Because of this permanent member, the Council is not even able to condemn the use of chemical-weapons attacks this past weekend in Douma, during which the White Helmets once again demonstrated their unwavering commitment to their life-saving work in the most difficult circumstances.

With regard to the draft resolution proposed by the Russian Federation (S/2018/175), the Netherlands will vote against it. That draft resolution falls short in every possible way. It seems that the Russian Federation is unable to support an independent and impartial investigative mechanism. It seems that it can accept a mechanism only in which itself can decide when, where, how and by whom the investigation would be conducted, while leaving the mandate attributed to the Council subject to its veto.

This cannot be the end of the issue. The Security Council cannot remain passive in the face of the atrocities being committed in Syria. We must continue to work for an effective attribution mechanism, inside and outside the Security Council. Impunity must not prevail.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution contained in document S/2018/175, submitted by the Russian Federation.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Before I speak about the draft resolution before us (S/2018/175), I would like to say that I am very happy that my British colleague is familiar with the classic works of Marxism-Leninism, although that is hardly surprising, because Marx, Engels and Lenin were frequent visitors to London — indeed, Marx is buried there. But I would like to cite another quotation from Lenin, who wrote an article entitled "Better Fewer, but Better".

After the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria ended, in November of last year, it was Russia that found itself in the forefront of the efforts to fill the resulting gap. We drafted a resolution on the issue that we submitted to our colleagues for their consideration on 23 January. The Western camp immediately gave the draft text a hostile reception, since it eliminated the loopholes that enabled investigations to be manipulated and handed over to the control of the opponents of Damascus, as occurred with the JIM and which was the reason for its premature demise. I want to emphasize that we have not invented anything new in our text, but have merely brought the principles for the work of the new mechanism in line with the standards of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We now have a real opportunity to create a genuinely independent and impartial working mechanism that would help the Security Council to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the context of the conflict in Syria. All that it needs is for Council members to vote in favour of our draft resolution, and we call on them to do that.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2018/175, submitted by the Russian Federation.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation

Against:

France, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 6 votes in favour, 7 votes against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution was not adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): As I have taken the floor once today already, I will be brief. With regard to Karl Marx, I think he must be turning in his grave to see what the country that was founded on many of his precepts is doing in the name of supporting Syria by condoning the use of chemical weapons on Syrian territory.

We voted against the Russian draft resolution (S/2018/175) for a number of reasons. The Russian text is a distraction. It has lain dormant around the Security Council for weeks. There was no attempt to meet other Council members' concerns in its drafting, unlike the United States text (S/2018/321), which had adapted its original preferences precisely to try to meet those of the Russian Federation and others. The Russian text does nothing to bring a political process any closer. Specifically, it moves the parameters on access and imparts a quasi-judicial standard — "beyond a reasonable doubt" — that is inappropriate for the type of investigation that the Council wishes to establish. If the Russians want a criminal investigation, they could always suggest that we refer the matter to the International Criminal Court. Furthermore, there is selective quoting of the Chemical Weapons Convention to undermine the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, and it takes a selective approach to the parameters of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

But, above all, the text is unacceptable because it seeks to assert that sovereign States are above international law and international norms. That is breathtaking both in its arrogance and its ignorance, and for that reason alone, if not the others, we could not support it.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): Yesterday I said that history will record this moment (see S/PV.8225) as one when we as the Security Council either lived up to our responsibilities or showed our complete failure to protect the Syrian people. Today we have our answer. The votes have been cast. The record will show that today some countries decided to stand up for truth, accountability and justice for the Syrian people.

Most countries saw the horror that took place in Douma last weekend at the hands of the Al-Assad regime and realize that today was a time for action. Month after month, the Al-Assad regime, with the full support of Russia and Iran, has strung the Security Council along. They ignored our calls for a ceasefire, for political dialogue and for deliveries of humanitarian aid. They ignored our calls to stop using chemical weapons — weapons that are universally banned from war. And then, last weekend, the Al-Assad regime forced a moment of reckoning on all of us by gassing people in Douma.

The United States and the countries that joined us today could not allow that attack to go unanswered. The record will not be kind to one permanent member of the Council. Unfortunately, Russia has again chosen the Al-Assad regime over the unity of the Security Council. We have said before that Russia will stop at nothing to shield the Al-Assad regime, and now we have our answer. Russia has trashed the credibility of the Council. It is not interested in unity or compromise. Whenever we propose anything meaningful to Russia, Russia vetoes it. It is a travesty. It has now officially vetoed draft resolutions that would hold Al-Assad accountable for these barbaric chemical attacks six times.

Things did not have to turn out this way. For weeks, the United States has led transparent, good-faith negotiations with all Security Council members to establish an attribution mechanism for chemical weapons in Syria. We started from the simple premise that every Council member would want to know who was responsible for using those barbaric and illegal weapons. We did everything to accommodate Russia's views. Russia surprised us with a proposed draft resolution (S/2018/175), calling all of us into the

Security Council Chamber and handing out the draft text on the spot. After hearing widespread concerns about its draft resolution, Russia moved ahead anyway, accommodating no one's views. We could have done the same, but instead we tried to take as much as we could from Russia's draft text, while maintaining an impartial and independent process. We negotiated in good faith.

Many aspects of our draft resolutions were similar. Russia said that the investigators should have safe access to the places where chemical weapons were used. We agreed. Russia said that it wanted an impartial, independent and professional investigation. We agreed. Russia said that the investigators should be recruited on as wide a geographical basis as possible. We agreed. Russia said that it wanted reports on the activities of non-State actors involving chemical weapons. Although that sounded to us like an attempt to distract from the Al-Assad regime, we included Russia's request. We even gave our mechanism the name that Russia wanted — the United Nations independent mechanism of investigation.

There were really only two key differences between our draft resolution and that of Russia, but those differences speak volumes. First, Russia wanted to give itself the opportunity to approve the investigators who were chosen for the task. Secondly, Russia wanted the Security Council to assess the findings of any investigation before any report was released. Does any of that sound independent or impartial? Russia's proposal was not about an independent and impartial investigation at all. It was all about protecting the Al-Assad regime.

This is a sad day. The United States takes no pleasure in seeing Russia exercise its sixth veto on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria. Only last week, we had hoped that the one-year anniversary of the Khan Shaykun attack might be the start of a renewed partnership to combat chemical weapons. However, those deadly weapons have been used on Syrian families again. When the people of Douma, along with the rest of the international community, looked to the Council to act, one country stood in the way. History will record that. History will record that, on this day, Russia chose to protect a monster over the lives of the Syrian people.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China has stated its principled position on the chemical weapons attack in Syria. The draft resolution on the establishment of a new investigative mechanism submitted by the Russian Federation (S/2018/175) condemns the chemicals weapons attack in Syria and calls for the creation of a new investigative mechanism to establish the facts and the truth. We can all agree on those positive elements.

In addition, it proposes improved working methods compared to previous investigative mechanism and set out concrete steps to carry out a robust on-site investigation on the ground and to ensure impartiality in the process of collecting evidence. As a result, the new investigative mechanism would be able to function with greater professionalism and to reach a truly credible conclusion. Those elements are in line with China's principled position. We support Russia's draft resolution. China regrets that the draft resolution was not adopted.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am taking the floor following the voting on the two draft resolutions (S/2018/175 and S/2018/321) above all to express our frustration over the fact that the Security Council was not able to adopt either the first or the second draft, which sought to give the Council an independent and professional mechanism with a mandate to attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons, despite the fact that all Security Council members expressed their desire in that regard. That is precisely why we voted in favour of both draft resolutions in the hope of having a new monitoring mechanism to attribute responsibility so as to protect people from the terrible and harmful effects of such chemical weapons.

Despite the negative outcome of the voting on both draft resolutions, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, whose position on the use of chemical weapons we have clearly set out during the debates on the issue, wants the members of the Security Council to seek and to explore other alternative draft texts that could merit the joint agreement or the consensus of the Security Council so that we can establish that new mechanism as soon as possible. That is what the people who are suffering, or in the future may suffer, the terrible effects of chemical weapons hope and expect of the Security Council.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): It is indeed regrettable that the Council could not adopt a resolution to establish a new mechanism that would identify those responsible

for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Establishing such a tool would have sent a quick and unified message regarding the resolve of the Council not to tolerate impunity. That is how we view the defeat of both draft resolutions (S/2018/175 and S/2018/321). However, we were not at all surprised.

We voted in favour of both draft resolutions, consistent with our position in reaffirming the importance of setting up an independent, impartial and professional investigative mechanism with a view to ensuring accountability. No doubt, such a mechanism would clearly have addressed the existing institutional gap in that regard, which continues to be a source of major weakness in the fight against impunity.

Both draft resolutions sought the establishment of such a mechanism. Clearly, there are differences, among others, concerning some aspects of the accountability mechanism. We believe that we have come some distance in bridging those differences. It would have been a major achievement, both functionally and from the point of view of enhancing trust, which is so greatly needed in order to address the challenge not only of ensuring non-proliferation but also of advancing the cause of international peace and security. That was why we were hoping that we could achieve consensus on the matter and unity within the Council.

Frankly speaking, we do not like what we see. At the risk of sounding self-righteous — and the challenge that we face makes taking the risk appropriate — we must say that we are deeply disappointed about the situation that we are in. Since we have no alternative, it remains important that we all persevere in continuing our dialogue and supporting the efforts to ensure unity, without which the Council will not be in a position to discharge its principal responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, in particular repairing the damage to the chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Yesterday, we expressed our concern about the difficult situation we are currently facing (see S/PV.8225). We do not wish to repeat what we said, but allow me to state in closing that we look forward to handling the issue of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma, eastern Damascus, with a greater sense of responsibility. That is how we intend to look at the draft resolution from Russia before us, a draft which, in our view, is relatively similar to the draft resolution informally made available by Sweden yesterday, whenever the Council is ready to handle it.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I support the statement in explanation of vote on the American draft resolution (S/2018/321) made earlier in the meeting by the representative of the United Kingdom, who said that today is actually a sad day. It is a sad day for the non-proliferation regime, and a sad day for civilians — particularly women, children and the elderly — throughout Syria, and specifically Douma in eastern Ghouta. We ask their forgiveness because we have disappointed them once again. The Council has been unable to establish a mechanism that would hold accountable those who commit crimes by using chemical weapons in Syria. We ask their forgiveness because the Council has been unable to put an end to the serious and gross violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law and many Security Council resolutions condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We ask their forgiveness because the Council has been unable to hold to account the perpetrators of crimes related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Our position has always been clear. We have called for consensus in the Council on this sensitive issue, which touches on accountability and impunity. We voted in favour of the United States draft resolution because it contains the basic elements that we think are necessary to establish any new accountability mechanism in Syria in order to guarantee its independence, neutrality and professionalism. The mechanism would identify the perpetrators responsible for any chemical attack, and then the Security Council would shoulder its responsibility in terms of sanctions.

We abstained in the voting on the draft resolution presented by the Russian Federation (S/2016/175) because it did not include the elements to which I have referred. It would undermine the credibility of the new mechanism by depriving it of its fundamental terms of reference, namely, to determine whoever is responsible in the event of attacks using chemical weapons. We are very concerned about the result of voting today because it will encourage parties to the conflict to continue using chemical weapons in the absence of accountability.

Kuwait supported the code of conduct whereby the States members of the Security Council would commit to not opposing draft resolutions dealing with crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. We also

supported the French-Mexican initiative on abstention in the use of the veto in cases of human rights violations.

As a result of the voting today, and based on our commitment to abiding by the four Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols, international humanitarian law and the final outcome of 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, we call again for crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as humanitarian issues, to receive due attention. That would include allowing the safe and sustainable delivery of humanitarian assistance and medical evacuations, and preventing the siege of residential areas. These should be treated as procedural issues; they should not be subject to a veto so that such human tragedies and sufferings are never repeated.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Like everyone else, we deeply regret that today the Council was prevented once again from establishing a responsibility-attribution mechanism for the purpose of impartially identifying the perpetrators and organizers of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. I am sure we all share a sense of very tragic déjà vu as we repeat the scenario the Council faced in November when the renewal of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism was blocked.

However — and I apologize to all of those who are tired of hearing me say this — we will not give up. Efforts to reach an agreement on a responsibility-attribution mechanism must continue, and we support all serious and genuine initiatives that aim to achieve this objective. We stand ready to help facilitatory efforts to find a way forward. Accountability for the use of chemical weapons is crucial. As we have stated before, the Syrian people suffering from more than seven years of conflict deserve no less from us. They want peace and justice, not further military escalation or impunity.

A collective response to the most recent alleged chemical weapons attack in Douma therefore remains urgent and critical. The credibility of the Council is at stake. We must now come together to swiftly condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria and express alarm at the alleged attack in Douma. We must support an immediate and further investigation through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and we must demand full, free and safe access without any restrictions or impediments to the fact-finding mission in its immediate deployment to Syria.

Establishing the facts of what has taken place in Douma remains an essential first step towards confirming the alleged use of chemical weapons and finding the truth, and we need independent, impartial attribution of guilt followed by full accountability. The Council must remain seized and live up to its responsibility. That is why we circulated yesterday a draft text aimed at finding common ground. We stand ready to work tirelessly to find agreement on a robust, swift and immediate response. We need to come back together again after the failure that we have just witnessed.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): Our position remains unchanged and consistent. Due to well-known historical reasons, Kazakhstan has always taken a firm and resolute stance of uncompromising condemnation of any use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. We do so as that is an extremely heinous action and an unacceptable war crime. We have also been in support of attaching paramount importance to the creation of a new investigative mechanism. That has been strongly reiterated, and we have pressed for its urgency. Impunity for chemical crimes is not acceptable. It sends the wrong signal to those who continue to use or intend to use such an extremely heinous weapon. However, in order to punish anyone, we must be able to prove guilt completely and irrefutably. In that regard, the creation of a full-fledged, impartial and independent investigative tool is of the utmost necessity for all.

We have worked in earnest with the delegations of the United States and the Russian Federation. We must recognize that the use of chemical weapons in Syria continues, along with the persistent threat of chemical terrorism, to present a grave reality. In addition, many allegations of the use of chemical agents in Syria are still undisclosed. Based on the aforementioned circumstances and understanding the need to preserve this mechanism, we supported both draft resolutions intended to create new investigative mechanisms. We urge that we all work together for the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): This meeting is an interesting one from a variety of perspectives. One is that Lenin and Marx, two anti-imperialists, have been invoked more than once. What we have seen today is related to that topic. It is a fact that all empires are under the illusion that they are morally superior to the rest of us, that they believe themselves to be exceptional and indispensable and that they are above the law. In this, as in other cases, they do not seek to advance democracy or

freedom, but rather ultimately to expand their power and domination worldwide.

What we have seen today is a sad reflection of what is happening on the battlefield in Syria and of those interests. I would like to echo the words of the Swedish Ambassador in urging the Security Council not to rest until we are united and can reach consensus, if indeed we believe in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is the Charter, and whether the members of the Council can fulfil it, that is ultimately at stake. One of our responsibilities under it is to refrain from taking unilateral action. We hope that principle will be honoured.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution contained in document S/2018/322, submitted by the Russian Federation.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We too are sorry that our draft resolution (S/2018/175) was not adopted today, but at the moment neither it nor the United States draft resolution (S/2018/321) would have had any influence on the investigation of the alleged incident in Douma. Right now, that is not what they are about. There is no need to mislead anybody by saying that, or that there were intensive consultations on the American draft resolution but not on ours, or that most of our amendments were supposedly taken into account. Our colleagues will now tell the press that we vetoed their resolution, while modestly remaining silent about the fact that just as with the draft resolutions on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, they also vetoed ours.

Yesterday, during the meeting on threats to international peace and security (see S/PV.8225), there was an emotional discussion of the event, or the alleged event, in Douma on 7 April. Based on the results of the inspection conducted by our specialists, we said that a chemical attack could not be confirmed. Nonetheless, we advocated for the speediest possible investigation of all of the circumstances by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and affirmed our willingness to facilitate its work on the ground. The Government of Syria has sent the OPCW an official request that such a mission be dispatched to Douma as soon as possible.

Yesterday, the Swedish delegation put forward a fairly constructive text for a corresponding draft resolution. Unfortunately, their initiative was undeveloped and was trampled down thanks to the confrontational efforts of the United States and its closest allies, which had decided to shift the focus away from the issue of an investigation of what happened on 7 April. That is understandable, because they have already identified the guilty parties. As far as they are concerned, the so-called regime, along with Russia and Iran, is always to blame for everything. The investigation does not interest them. Well, sometimes it does, but only if it is based on so-called exclusive data from the opposition's social networks.

For the hundredth time, I would like to ask the same question yet again. Can someone here explain clearly and plainly why Damascus needed this alleged chemical attack in Douma in principle, especially since practically all of the militias had evacuated Douma by then? And the militias who were still being evacuated on 8 April knew nothing about the alleged occurrence of this chemical attack. I will answer my own question. The provocation was desperately needed by the militias who received that very timely support from the United States and other Western countries.

We decided to develop the Swedish initiative, and our draft resolution notes the Syrian Government's invitation to the OPCW Fact-finding Mission to visit the site of the alleged event without delay. It welcomes the decision of the Director-General of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to send the Mission to Syria in order to conduct investigative work in line with Chemical Weapons Convention standards. It takes into account the guarantees of safe access provided by the Syrian authorities and Russian military forces. Fifteen days later, the Secretary-General would submit the first report to the Security Council.

This is a strictly practical, non-confrontational and depoliticized initiative in support of the OPCW, which would help the specialists in this area determine what did, or rather did not, take place in Douma. And that is the priority now, not the draft resolution on a United Nations independent investigative mechanism, which was hastily submitted for a vote with the obvious aim of seeing both draft resolutions vetoed. We hope that Council members will give this initiative their unanimous support so that the process can begin as soon as possible. According to our information, two

expert groups from the OPCW Fact-finding Mission should leave for Syria by the end of this week.

Whatever the excuse that may be given, if the experts do not reach Douma because they have been prevented by those who continue to speculate about the chemical issue in order to smear Syria and Russia, that will be yet another piece of evidence showing that behind this thoroughly false story are dirty geopolitical games and, what is worse, aggressive military plans capable of reversing the positive trend in the resolution of Syria's conflict and inflicting a painful blow on a region already tormented by adventurist assaults. We are witnessing all of that literally in real time.

We request that you put this draft resolution to a vote, Mr. President.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We want swift and resolute action today, and we want the Security Council to shoulder its collective responsibility. But I am not sure that we have exhausted all the avenues that could get us there nor am I sure that voting on this new Russian draft resolution (S/2018/322) will get us there either. We feel that we are at a very fragile stage of Council deliberations right now, and we need to reflect carefully on the way forward to ensure that we do not jump into further paralysis, with consequences that will be difficult to defend or repair.

That is why I would like to ask you, Mr. President, to suspend the meeting right here and now so that we can all move into consultations and carefully and collectively reflect on the next step.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened carefully to what the Permanent Representative of Sweden has just said. To be candid, we are somewhat puzzled by his statement, because the draft resolution that we submitted (S/2018/322) is, in essence, based on the same idea as the draft submitted yesterday by the Swedish delegation. I do not know what we are going to consult on in consultations. I believe we already consulted on this subject yesterday. However, out of respect for the Swedish delegation and those delegations who would like to hold consultations, we are not against that. But let me say right away that we intend to put this draft resolution to a vote today, after our consultations. We hope that the consultations will be constructive and will not drag on for long, because that is certainly not necessary at this point. We need to adopt this draft resolution in support of the mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in order to establish the facts on the ground as quickly as possible.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): If there is no objection, I will suspend the meeting. We will continue after our consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 5.45 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/2018/322, submitted by the Russian Federation.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation

Against:

France, Poland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The result of the voting is as follows: 5 votes in favour, 4 against and 6 abstentions. The draft resolution was not adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I will be brief. In the Consultations Room just now, Mr. President, you and the representative of Sweden made valiant attempts at a compromise. We all appreciate what is at stake and thank you for your and Sweden's efforts.

But, fundamentally, the United Kingdom could not vote for the Russian text (S/2018/322) because it does not establish an investigation into who was responsible for the attack. It only welcomes the Fact-finding Mission, which is already on its way. I repeat what I said in consultations: the Fact-finding Mission determines whether chemical weapons were used and, if they were, which chemical weapons were used. It does not, and cannot, establish who was responsible for

their use — and thus start on the first step on the path to attribution and accountability. For that reason, we are not able to support the text. It would be like watching a fire, identifying that there was a fire, and doing nothing to put it out.

The Russians invited us to return to the issue of an investigative mechanism on a separate occasion. I am afraid that the answer to that is 17 November 2017, when Russia vetoed a joint investigative mechanism that it had itself decided to set up.

For all those reasons, all it would have taken is a written decision for an investigation set up by the Security Council. Russia could not take that small step, and therefore we were not able to support the draft resolution. I very much regret that, but the answer was in Russia's hands.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Recent reports concerning the use of chemical weapons in Douma and the consequent civilian casualties have given rise to serious concern on the part of the international community. China has noted that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has already asked its Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the relevant reports. We support the OPCW in sending investigators to Syria so as to establish the truth. We call on all parties concerned to cooperate with the investigation.

The draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation (S/2018/322) expresses deep concern about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April, strongly condemns the chemical-weapons attacks that took place in Syria and elsewhere, urges the OPCW Fact-finding Mission to carry out an on-site investigation, and provides that the Syrian Government and other parties will ensure the security of and safe access to investigators. The draft resolution is in keeping with China's principled position. China supports and voted in favour of the Russian draft resolution.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We deeply regret that we have ended up here following a long day of serious efforts to move forward by some of us — I believe. We abstained in the voting on the Russian draft resolution (S/2018/322) a few moments ago because the attribution and accountability track, which we believe is important, lacked clarity. We called for consultations earlier because we felt that, provided there was political will, an opportunity remained for us to come together and shoulder our responsibility today.

We put forward a draft resolution (S/2018/321) to all members that we felt was credible and assertive, and was intended to support the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It was also very clear in its determination to establish an impartial, independent and professional investigative mechanism, and we had suggested that the Secretary-General help us recommend the best way forward in that area and give him 10 days to come back to the Council. I believe that would have been a much better way forward than where we are right now.

I am therefore very disappointed that we have not been able to move forward on this. I thank all those members of the Security Council that were ready to engage, and I just hope that we do not consider this the end with regard to ensuring that the facts will be established and that there will be true accountability and no more impunity for the horrendous use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I once again express the frustration of our delegation over this afternoon's negative outcome. We abstained in the voting on the third draft resolution (S/2018/322), first of all because it was submitted only very late today and, secondly, because it is lacking compared to the two previous draft resolutions on which we voted in favour (S/2018/175 and S/2018/321). We believe that we should ask the representative of Sweden, Mr. Olof Skoog, not to withdraw his proposal so that following this meeting — perhaps tomorrow afternoon — as was suggested during consultations, we can continue considering and analysing it to see whether we can agree to vote on the draft resolution once we have introduced amendments and reached a consensus on the text that he has presented.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland voted against the draft resolution (S/2018/322) presented by Russia. We believe that the draft resolution submitted originally by Sweden was an honest attempt to enable the Security Council to respond promptly to the horrific act of violence that occurred in eastern Ghouta on Saturday. To that end, the Security Council needs to re-establish a professional, truly independent and impartial accountability mechanism. The draft resolution proposed by the Russian Federation is missing that important provision. That is why we had to vote against it.

Mrs. Haley (United States): I thank you, Sir, and members of the Security Council for what has been another frustrating day. My parents always said that you should always see the good in everyone and in everything. I have therefore been trying to figure out what the good is in Russia. I believe that it is very good at being consistent, and I believe that it is very good at playing games. We saw that when we took up the issue of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. Russia loved the Joint Investigative Mechanism until we found one side guilty, and then it decided that it did not want it. We then adopted the ceasefire, and Russia loved the idea of the ceasefire until Al-Assad had a problem with it and subsequently violated it. Today Russia vetoed for the sixth time a draft resolution (S/2018/321) condemning Al-Assad for chemical-weapons attacks on his own people. No matter what we do, Russia will be consistent.

Russia will continue to play games, and once again it is putting forward yet another surprise draft resolution (S/2018/322). The first time that any of us saw it was today at 11 a.m. The Russians held no negotiations. It took no input, and, when Sweden asked that the Council be allowed to discuss the draft resolution, Russia allowed that but did not want any changes to it. There is a reason for which Russia did not want to discuss its resolution, and that is because it does not accomplish anything. The draft resolution mainly asks for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to send its Fact-finding Mission to Douma, but the Fact-finding Mission is already travelling to Douma. It already has a mandate to investigate and collect samples. What makes it worse is that Russia includes several provisions in its draft resolution that are deeply problematic and once again seeks to compromise the credibility of the international investigation.

The draft resolution puts Russia and the Al-Assad regime itself in the driver seat for making arrangements for the Fact-finding Mission investigators. We are just supposed to trust that the same Government that says that everything concerning the Douma attack was fake will work in good faith with the OPCW. This draft resolution also tries to micromanage how the Fact-finding Mission should carry out its investigation, while dictating where the investigators should go. As we have always said, for an investigation to be credible and independent, the investigators must choose where they believe they should go. Members of the Council — least of all Russia — should not be calling the shots. For those reasons, the United States voted against the draft resolution.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2018/322) because we saw value in its adoption as it offered, we thought, the possibility for the protection of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. Frankly, we tried to find weaknesses in the text. We could not. It is a matter-of-fact and uncomplicated draft resolution. We could not find any reason not to support it. Undoubtedly, it would not have made achieving attribution possible, but finding out whether chemical weapon were in fact used would have been a great achievement.

Of course, so far the Russian position has been that there was no use of chemical weapons in Douma. Establishing the facts surrounding that assertion or position would have been a great achievement. We are not in a position to take advantage of the guarantee offered or the Council's strong support in that regard. We felt that the Fact-finding Mission needed the support.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Frankly speaking, I think all of us have seen everything for ourselves. Unfortunately, the failure to adopt draft resolution S/2018/322 really is a litmus test says a great deal and leaves us extremely apprehensive. We proposed a very innocuous draft resolution, which is moreover virtually a complete repeat of Sweden's draft text from yesterday. I find it difficult to understand which might be the parts where Mrs. Haley read between the lines to di cover our scheming and our trickery. Perhaps the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom answered that when she said that they could not adopt the Russian draft resolution — let us say it out loud — because it was a Russian draft resolution. Then everything was clear.

The United States representative said that we are very good at playing games. I am not sure about that. What I am sure of is that she is very good at making threats, and the threats that the United States is making with regard to Syria should make us all extremely alarmed, because we may be standing on the threshold of some very sad and terrible events. I would once again like to ask the United States to refrain from executing the plans that it may be incubating for Syria. Unfortunately, the refusal of the United States to adopt the draft resolution speaks to the fact that our

American partners and colleagues do not need any real investigation, which is something that we discussed earlier. We regret the fact that the draft resolution was not adopted, although it is true that the Fact-finding Mission will, I hope, reach Syria soon and be able to get to work on its principal mandate, which is establishing the facts about what really happened in Douma.

To repeat what I have said once again, in all innocence, the Russian military and the Syrian Government will provide support to the mission in terms of ensuring its security. I hope that does not raise questions for anyone, because it is simply what must be done. We hope that the Mission will be able to make the trip effectively and without delay.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by thanking Sweden for its efforts and attempts to achieve rapprochement and to smooth over the differences among the members of the Security Council. We are disappointed by the Council's inability to reach consensus on this important matter and by the fact that the divisions among Council members unfortunately continue.

We abstained in the voting, despite the fact that the gist of draft resolution S/2018/322 calls for an investigation into what took place in Douma, which is what we called for. The investigation should be undertaken by an international, independent and impartial body, which in this case is the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, the OPCW Fact-finding Mission will go to Syria anyway, and the Council welcomed that fact yesterday. There is therefore no need for a draft resolution. What we are looking for is an international, independent, neutral and professional body or mechanism that would investigate the incident and identify the party that has used chemical weapons, if it indeed determines that chemical weapons have been used. That approach will enable the Council to hold the perpetrators accountable, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank everybody for today's very difficult and unfortunately unproductive day. We voted for the Russian Federation's draft resolution (S/2018/322) on sending a fact-finding mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as soon as possible because, as we said yesterday in raising this very simple question, we need to know what happened on the ground.

Yesterday we were also very clear when we said that there were different and conflicting reports about the number of casualties and even about the very fact that the chemical attack had taken place. We requested and supported the important proposal that a fact-finding mission should go to Douma to establish the facts on the ground. We are not talking right now about who did it, but we are talking about the fact of the event itself. We needed to understand what was there and what had happened there. Sending a fact-finding mission was very important to us and to all the delegations that do not have a presence there to understand the objective reality of the place. Even if the only information obtained is about the kind of substance that was used, that would be very useful for us to understand who the perpetrators might be and at the very least establish the fact that a chemical attack took place. In this kind of understanding, we very much support sending OPCW experts to investigate on the ground in order to give us information on which we can base an objective opinion about the situation.

We are not taking sides here, and we were very clear about that yesterday. We would like to receive full, objective, transparent and unbiased information about the facts that we are addressing here. We are therefore glad that the OPCW is sending a group to Douma, regardless of the results of today's voting on draft resolutions. We are hopeful that we can at least get this preliminary information about the situation in Douma. I would like to say once again that we in the Security Council should be objective and base our decisions on the simple facts that may be presented to us by the independent organizations that will determine whether there was a chemical attack or not.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): After having vetoed a draft resolution that sought to shed full light on acts of violence involving chemical weapons (S/2018/175), including those that took place last weekend, Russia persists in a dual strategy of obstruction and diversion on the matter. The only aim of the draft text on which we have just voted (S/2018/322) was clearly to confuse the issue. It is not a question of disputing the importance of an independent investigation by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) into what happened in Douma on 7 April. That is essential, and the investigation has already been launched.

However, the Russian draft resolution, which we had to vote against, did not meet the challenges.

Let us be clear: what we lack today, and what Russia continues to reject, is a truly independent and impartial mechanism that can attribute responsibility in order to prevent impunity. That was the raison d'être for the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. With the establishment of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, set up with the involvement of Russia, we put in place a tool for the essential deterrence of perpetrators of chemical attacks. That is clearly what we lack today.

Let us be clear in saying that statements are not enough and that the Russian draft resolution is only a smokescreen that falls well short of the urgent response that the Council should provide. That is why France voted against the draft resolution and why the draft resolution was not adopted.

Today I reiterate that France will spare no effort to ensure that the perpetrators of those chemical horrors are identified and held to account in an independent and impartial way. The stakes are extremely high, and we will not give up.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): We abstained in the voting on the draft resolution (S/2018/322) because we had serious hesitations about the text, as it differed in some crucial aspects from the Swedish text put forward yesterday.

First of all, the text makes it insufficiently clear that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic already has the mandate for on-site visits, as States have to comply with it. They do not need the Council's authorization. Secondly, the text is unduly restrictive. Paragraph 3 is not a correct reflection of the decision of the Director-General or of his existing mandate. The necessity of on-site investigations is up to the team to decide. My third point is that the fact-finding mission should be able to perform its mandate in complete independence. Fourthly, we do not want the precedent that Security Council authorization is needed for a fact-finding mission to do its work. We are convinced that those were issues that we could have solved if the draft resolution had been put forward for proper consultations. We received it this morning. We regret that those concerns could not be taken into account.

My last point is that one colleague said that the litmus test of this evening, and of today, was the voting on this draft resolution. I disagree. The litmus test of today's meeting was the veto by one permanent member on the establishment of an effective attribution mechanism.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall be very brief.

Bolivia voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2018/322) for several reasons. One of those is that, although the nature of the events that have been condemned is unknown, the highest authorities of the Organization have pointed out that the United Nations is not is a position to verify the reports of such events. It is therefore essential to establish the truth by means of an independent and impartial investigation. Many of those reports come from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and we know who finances those NGOs. Therefore, we must allow doubts with regard to such sources.

Analysing the draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation word by word, from the point of view of intellectual integrity, commitment to the Syrian people or international law, we found no reason to vote against the draft resolution.

Nevertheless, what concerns us is what is being planned outside the structure of this edifice. While it was said today that Lenin and Marx would probably be turning in their graves, I do not know about that. But what is certain is that Churchill and Roosevelt, for example, are turning in their graves because, as founding fathers of the structure of this world order, they endowed the Security Council with the authority to use force to deal with threats to international peace and security. I am not sure that they would be very happy that the outcome of such events, without a full and conclusive investigation, is that some of its members undertake the unilateral use of force. In any case, we remain hopeful that the Security Council will shoulder its responsibility and that, through unity, it can help to identify the perpetrators of any attack against international peace and security, if that is the case.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Peru.

We regret that we were not able to achieve consensus this afternoon on a draft resolution with regard to the delicate situation in Syria. We underscore that the investigation being carried out on the use of chemical weapons must be complemented by an independent, impartial and professional mechanism that attributes

responsibility. That is why we abstained in the voting on this occasion.

We reiterate the need for the Security Council to regain its sense of unity on this very delicate subject so that it can fulfil its high responsibilities and thereby alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. That is why we will continue to explore options on this important matter.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I remind speakers of the content of presidential note S/2017/507 with regard to the length of statements.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I will give colleagues who are about to leave the Chamber some of my valuable time. They are afraid that I will beat them in the battle of arguments. They become terrified when they hear any opposing views.

Those who just left the Chamber said in their statements that today was a sad day for the non-proliferation regime. I would like to refresh their memories and say that violation of the non-proliferation regime is the speciality of the following Western States. The United States of America used nuclear weapons in Japan. It used chemical and biological weapons in Viet Nam and enriched uranium in Iraq. France used Algerian human beings when it tested its first atomic bomb in the Algerian desert in 1960. In fact, it placed living Algerians in the desert tied to poles, and dropped on them the first French atomic bomb. Britain, of course, conducted all its nuclear tests in its colonies on islands in the oceans. The British Ambassador then says that day was a sad day for the people of Douma.

English is not my mother tongue, but I know that there are no people of Douma. There are inhabitants in Douma. There are Syrian people. There are no people of Douma. However, beyond Marx, Engels and Lenin, I would like to quote from Shakespeare as saying: "Lies shame you. Speak the truth or remain silent".

My British colleague said that Russia does not have the authority to go to Douma and establish whether or not chemicals were used there, stating that it is not within the jurisdiction of our Russian friends, who are on the ground, to go to Douma and investigate the scene. That is quite strange. Britain should have advised itself in the same manner when it sent intelligence officers to Khan Shaykhoun and conferred upon itself the authority to collect samples with the French. They took the samples to British and French laboratories, as they claimed, without coordinating with the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) or the Fact-finding Mission. That is quite the paradox: giving themselves the very right that they deprive others.

Approximately two weeks ago, Britain signed an agreement with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia for an arms deal worth $100 billion — much bigger than the Al-Yamamah deal — to continue killing people in Yemen, start new wars in the region with Iran and Syria and entrench never-ending wars throughout the entire region. That is what Britain is capable of doing. Mahatma Gandhi knew the British well, and he was right when he said, "If two fish broke out into a fight in the sea, everyone knows it was Britain that started it".

The American colleague said that there is only one monster facing the entire world in defiance today. That monster has financed terrorists in Syria for seven years and provided them with arms. I would say that the monster is the United States, Britain and France. They sponsored terrorism in my country for seven years, and before that they did the same in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. They sponsored terrorist organizations starting with Taliban and Da'esh, down to the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaida, Jaysh Al-Islam, Faylaq Al-Rahman and the White Helmets, which British intelligence newly invented. The monster she spoke of unleashed lies in order to destroy, occupy and send troops thousands of miles throughout the world to destabilize international peace and security. The monster is the American who, thus far, refuses to destroy his chemical arsenal, as we know, yet lectures others on destroying chemical weapons.

My French colleague said that he was horrified by the pictures he saw. But he was not horrified by the pictures of the hundreds of civilians who were killed in the 2016 French air strikes in Toukhar village in the rural area of Manbij. Two hundred civilians were killed, including entire families, by France's war planes. The French Ambassador must not have seen those pictures, and consequently they were not a source of horror for him. The concept of double standards is an understatement for those people.

In response to the web of lies spread by some Western States against my country regarding the

alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma on 7 April, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic sent today, 10 April, an official invitation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Douma in order to investigate the allegations of the use of chemical weapons there and to determine the facts about those allegations. I informed members of the Council of that invitation yesterday in this very Chamber (see S/PV.8225). The Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the visit of the fact-finding mission and stands ready to fully cooperate, provide all forms of assistance to the mission in the discharge of its duties and guarantee the safety of its personnel. It will also facilitate interviewing and sampling in accordance with the terms of reference. Syria looks forward to the fact-finding mission carrying out its work in a full, transparent and professional manner and while relying on credible and tangible evidence. If it does deploy, it will find Douma liberated and it will be granted full access to any location it wishes to visit.

The situation is quite clear. The co-sponsors of the American draft resolution (S/2018/321) do not seek the truth, because it will simply expose them and their terrorist proxies on the ground. Instead of waiting for the OPCW fact-finding mission to determine whether or not toxic chemicals were used in Douma, they present draft resolutions that do not enjoy consensus, nor do they seek truth, but rather establish non-objective mechanisms that pre-empt results in support of their political accusations and agendas. They are aware that a clone of the JIM would not be accepted by the States in the Council that are dedicated to the quest for truth regarding who is using toxic chemicals against Syrian civilians.

In that regard, I underscore that the United States, Britain and France made the JIM fail by thwarting it through politicizing its work, putting pressure on members of its leadership and blackmailing them. Consequently, the JIM lacked credibility and professionalism, as it fabricated reports that accused the Syrian Government based on the so-called open sources, of course including the White Helmets, and false testimonies and fabricated evidence emanating mostly from terrorist groups, most important of which is the terrorist Al-Nusra Front and the White Helmets, which is the British misleading media arm of the Al-Nusra Front.

The scenario that we witness today is exactly similar to what we witnessed a year ago when the United States of America launched a wanton aggression on the Al-Shayrat air base, which was founded on flimsy arguments and fabricated pretexts stating that the Syrian Arab Army used chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhoun. Those allegations were proven false when the United States and its allies prevented the experts of the JIM from visiting Khan Shaykhoun and collecting samples from the Al-Shayrat air base.

Things are crystal clear. The aggression of the United States and its accomplices, throughout history, thrives on lies, deceit and hegemony, as well as on the rule of the powerful. It is a brutal approach that will never respect the rule of law and international legitimacy. For seven years, my country, Syria, has been a stark example of what the United States and Britain did when they unleashed lies, misleading information and fabricated stories in this very Chamber in order to destroy and occupy Iraq. Their actions were grounded on the pretext of a significant lie, that is, the existence of the so-called weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

I am compelled each and every time to remind the Council of the position of former Secretary of State Colin Powell when, in this very Chamber (see S/PV.4701) — and I was sitting where the Deputy Permanent Representative of China is seated today — he presented tapes, documents, maps and pictures that were later discovered to have been produced, faked and fabricated by the American intelligence services for the purpose of invading Iraq. The operation was prepared in advance. The same scenario occurred with Libya.

The truth must be revealed. For centuries the world has witnessed various instances of occupation and hegemony, whose sole purpose was to loot the wealth of nations, occupy land or impose a geopolitical agenda. However, political immorality has reached a depth today to the extent that Libya has been destroyed and many of its people killed to cover up cases of bribery and financial corruption involving the President of a permanent member of the Council that talks about democracy and freedom. It is so low today to the extent that a permanent State regrettably forces Arab oil-exporting countries to foot the bill for its ongoing aggression and military intervention in my country, Syria. It is a business deal forged between the corrupt with the financial means and a mercenary who has weapons and power. Some permanent members of the Council commit acts of aggression against sovereign

countries simply to detract attention from domestic crises and ongoing controversy surrounding their political elite.

Following seven years of a dirty terrorist war that was imposed upon us, we in Syria believe that clear options exist — but they pose a major challenge to the majority of Council members. The Council must refute the lies and reverse the political deterioration that the United States, Britain and France are trying to push the Council towards engaging in. It is up to the Council today, and in the future, to make its decision. World public opinion and the people of the free world will judge whether or not the Council has assumed its responsibility to uphold international legitimacy, maintain international peace and security and protect the world against the horrible terrorism that is used and exploited by those three permanent member countries to undermine the stability and self-determination of States. I call upon the members of the Council to uphold a global, ethical and multilateral political system that believes in international law and in the right of peoples to self-determination, and rejects military, political and economic hegemony.

In conclusion, my country reiterates its condemnation in the strongest terms of any use of chemical weapons by any party, anywhere and under any circumstances. My country stands ready to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to reveal the allegations and lies being promoted by some Western parties so as to justify their aggression and serve their own political agenda. Their fleets are now in the eastern Mediterranean, waiting for the veto in order to start their aggression. I would like to inform those Western parties — and they must pay close attention to what I say — that their threats of aggression, manoeuvres, lies and terrorism will never prevent us — as one of the founding States of the Organization — from exercising our duties and rights under the Charter of the United Nations and our national Constitution to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity and to fend off aggression from any source. We will not allow anyone — big or small, permanent member or non-permanent member — to treat us the way Iraq and Libya were treated.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.